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CASTLE DALY:

THE STORY OF AN IRISH HOME THIRTY YEARS AGO.



CASTLE DALY:

THE
STORY OF AN IRISH HOME
THIRTY YEARS AGO.

BY
ANNIE KEARY,

AUTHOR OF "OLDBURY," ETC.

"Whereas to the composition of novels and romances nothing is necessary but paper, pens, and ink, with the manual capacity of using them."—FIELDING.

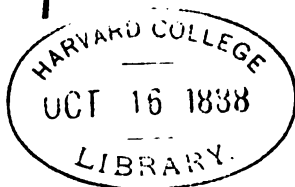
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CASTLE DALY:

THE STORY OF AN IRISH HOME THIRTY YEARS AGO.

CHAPTER I.

"Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day,
With night we banish sorrow."—HEYWOOD.

A BRIGHT sunny spring morning after a night of rain. Heavy clouds, like a dispersed but not beaten army, hung in threatening masses on the brows of a range of dark, slate-coloured mountains that shut in the landscape to the west, while the sun climbing the summit of a lower range of grass-clothed hills on the east made the waters of Lake Corrib dance in its light, and turned the rain-drenched trees that surrounded Castle Daly into a forest of diamonds. The house, a solid grey stone, many-windowed mansion, with a turreted roof, and four dilapidated towers ornamenting its sides, stood on a slope between two grassy hills and fronted the head of the lake just where its waters, after narrowing into a river-like channel through a pass in the hills, spread out again into a second shimmering sheet of silver where emerald slopes and purple heads saw themselves reflected.

The front door stood wide open that morning, as it generally did in all but the very worst weather, and from the top of its high stone steps a wide view was commanded. Frowning mountain heads and delicate purple distances, soft green levels shading into the blue of river and lake, the near ground being variegated with every gradation of tint, from black bog land to bright ferny hollows and cultivated fields. Just in front a lawn sloped from the

top of the little eminence on which the house stood to a white road skirting the northern shores of the lake, whose windings the eye could follow till they were lost among the hills. Bold outlines and fair colouring were to be seen at their very best under the radiance of the spring sunshine; but it was not altogether to enjoy them that the different members of the Castle Daly household, as they left their rooms one by one, passed the door of the breakfast parlour where the meal waited for them, and sauntered, hatless and bonnetless, down the hall steps into the rain-drenched garden.

It was more or less a matter of course with them all to spend rather more of their time out of doors than in, and if there was anything to be done at a fixed time, even such a pleasant thing as breakfast, an instinct against punctuality gave zest to a little preliminary dawdling.

First, a boy of about sixteen came out with a book in his hand, at which he gave a careless glance or two before thrusting it into his pocket and rushing across grass-plot and flower-border to join a group of servants who simultaneously left their work, in doors and out, at the sound of a bugle, and flocked to the yard gate to meet the bearer of the post-bag, who just then made his appearance blowing his bugle and driving at an astonishing rate up the road in a jaunting car.

Next a girl, about a year younger, with a dark silk handkerchief tied across her golden-haired head, tripped down the steps and stood for a minute or two quite still at the bottom, with hands clasped behind her back, and her face turned up with an intent, eager, pleased look towards the sloping hills at whose base the sunny waters of the lake glittered. Last, hatless, with his hands in the pockets of his loose morning coat, appeared the master himself, Squire Daly, "his honour," as the people around universally called him. He stooped his head instinctively in passing the doorway, as if not quite sure that even its high arch left him room enough to pass under, and then stretching his unusual length of limb against the door-post, crossed his arms on his breast and looked forth lazily. A large, well-made, good-natured giant style of man was "his honour," with a sunburnt handsome face on which it was difficult to say whether an expression of acuteness or

of lazy enjoyment predominated. His eyes glanced slowly, first with an amused twinkle in them towards his young son, the centre of a group of gesticulating servants, then over the landscape, half closing now and then, and peering intently as if to make out some object in the distance, brightening at last with a peculiar loving light as they rested on his daughter, who kept her motionless position at the foot of the steps, too closely wrapt in her own thoughts to be aware of his neighbourhood. He watched her for a second or two and then called out,

"Hollo! you Ell-woman, what uncanny spells are you weaving this morning for our undoing? are you summoning your kindred from the lake to help in your incantations? Come, leave the Good People, and pay a little attention to your father, you undutiful Princess of the Golden Locks."

The dreamy look vanished, the young girl sprang up the steps, and it was a brilliantly happy face, all sparkling with dimples and smiles, which received her father's morning kiss. "I had no idea you were down," she exclaimed; "I came out to gather your flower; I can't think how I came to forget it."

"I can. Your relations in the lake called you, and all the concerns of the upper world went clean out of your head, as your mother complains they usually do, you unpractical, yellow-haired O'Flaherty witch!"

By this time she had drawn him down the steps towards a flower border, and as she fastened a powdery purple auricula in his button-hole she said, "I don't believe she was a witch—that old Castle Hen heroine, only a true patriot, whom all Irish fairies were bound to work for. You may laugh at me as you will, but I shall always be glad that you called me after my yellow-haired O'Flaherty grandmother, and say that I am like her and Cousin Anne."

"Let me see, what was the penalty the old witch ancestress earned for herself and her descendants to the hundredth generation by her uncanny meddling with forbidden things—that all the gold they were ever to have was to be carried on their heads, never any in their pockets, was not that it? You stand a very good chance of exemplifying the prophecy in your person, madam." He lifted his daughter's hair, which had fallen down over her shoul-

ders as she stooped for the flower, and crumpled it up in his hands. "Here is a quantity of glittering useless stuff; what a pity it can't be melted down and stamped with the Queen's head; though stay, does not the legend, or at least Cousin Anne's version of it, say something about its being useful to bind hearts together with?"

"Oh, but I don't think your heart and mine want any binding together, do they, papa?—and that is all I care for."

"Tell me that three or four years hence, and I'll listen to you. But look, Eileen aroon, you certainly were making signs to your witch kindred. There is one of them waiting to speak to you down at the gate."

"Old Goodie Malachy, Murdock's grandmother! What can she want so early?"

Ellen ran to the gate and her father followed, sending his loud voice before him as he went.

"Goodie, Goodie, didn't I positively forbid you to come here more than twice a week, and is the place ever to be free of you?"

The old woman dropped a succession of rapid curtseys and raised her hands to heaven.

"Good luck to me that see and hear the master himself this blessed mornin'! Shure it was worth while walking every weary step of the way to see the sunshine of his face and hear his voice, that's music to ivery poor cratur in the country round."

"You'll hear the music to some purpose, you old humbug, if you don't do as I bid you. What business have you here to-day I want to know?"

"Well then, Mr. Daly, dear, 'twas just to save Miss Eileen's steps I came. Is it dainty feet like hers that should tramp the soft roads, and, ankle deep through the bog, afther all the rain, to bring me the trifle of tay and shugar she promised me this day?"

"But, Goodie, I don't think I promised to bring you any tea and sugar."

"May be, 'twas the young jintleman thin, spaking to comfort poor Murdock, breaking his heart, as he was yesterday at laving his granny to go to sarvice at Ballyowen for the pleasure of the mistress. 'It's me shистер that'll look after ye, graunny,' says the young jintleman,

God bless him! 'and see that she never wants for the grain of tay, and the crumb of sugar, nor the drop of whisky that's needful to keep her heart warm widin her, 'left forlorn and lonely in the bog by herself.'"

"The young gentleman said all that to Murdock? You've a fine imagination, Goodie, but here he comes to answer for himself. Connor!" called Mr. Daly to his son, who had left the yard gate and was strolling towards the house, "come here and confess how many things that don't belong to you, you have been generously giving away."

"Nothing, at any rate to you, Goodie Malachy," said the boy. "I've not forgiven you for sending Murdock away. I've not had a good day's fishing since he went. What business has he, I should like to know, to be running errands for a screw of an old grocer in Ballyowen when I want him about the place?"

"Truth's in every word ye spake, Mister Connor, dear. I'd not own him for a son, let alone a grandson, who'd be mane-spirited enough to choose service wid a bit of a shopkeeper whin he might be doin' his duty by the family. It's breakin' his heart over the slavery of it, Murdock is, this minute; but 'twas no thought of my own. Shure ye all know well enough 'twas the mistress herself laid her orders on me. I'm tellin' the bare truth widout a word of concalemint. 'Mrs. Malachy,' says she, standin' on that straight bit o' gravel walk where his honour stan's now, and lookin' at me out o' her brown eyes in the terrible searchin' way she has—shure, yer honour, ye know it—'Mrs. Malachy,' she says, 'ye do very wrong to let that slip of a boy belanging to ye idle his time fishin' wid Mr. Connor. It's larning an honest trade he should be at his age.' And thin, a week after, what did she do but drive up her own self to my cabin-door, and ordered me out to spake wid her, and tould me straight out how she'd settled it all wid the grocer at Ballyowen for Murdock to go to him and run errants; and it was thin—for I'll tell ye the clear truth now, since truth's always fittest to be spoken—'twas thin, and wid the mistress her own self, that the few words passed about the tay and shugar, and the trifle of whisky by times to keep up me lonely heart, that brought me here this day."

"Come, Goodie, that won't do. You'd better have stuck

out for Miss Eileen's or Mr. Connor's generosity ; this new fiction won't hold water at all."

"Well, anyhow, 'twas to pleasure the mistress I let the boy go from me; and oh, the loneliness of the place widout his voice and his smile!—I that have had him wid me since his father and mother died in one week of the faver! What will I do at all widout him, yer honour?"

"Nothing but unlimited tay, shugar, and whisky will make up for the loss—that's what you mean, I suppose? Now listen to me, Goodie. Mrs. Daly has put your grandson into the way of earning an honest livelihood for his own good; and you had better get rid, as quickly as you can, of every sort of notion that we are to bribe you into being thankful."

"For his own good! Yer honour says it's for the boy's raal good; and shure a jintleman like you ought to know. Well, then, I'll walk back as I came the three miles and a half to me lonely bit of a place in the bog wid that word of comfort to me heart, plased and contint to have had it from yer honour's own lips."

"You did not suppose that Mrs. Daly had any other motive than the boy's good, you silly old woman?"

"And indeed she's altogether a sinsible lady, wid ways of her own beyant such as me to comprehend at all; but it's the word from yer honour I go by. Now I've got it, I'll go home contint."

"But I may give her the 'tay and shugar,' mayn't I, papa?" said Ellen. "I don't exactly remember promising—but——"

"Take care, take care; the tay and shugar have provoked efforts of imagination enough already. Give her what you please. If my recollection of Murdock serves me right, much of anything won't be requisite to compensate for the loss of his society."

"I don't agree to that," said Connor. "I wish my mother had fixed on anyone else to turn into a grocer. He was the sharpest gossoon about the place, and I can't get on without him. Look here, Mrs. Malachy, when you see Murdock, tell him there's something he can do for me at Ballyowen. I've heard that there are two or three swans' nests among the reeds in the creek of the river just above the town. I wish he could manage to get me

an egg or two, and bring them up here the first time he gets a chance; and we'll have some fun together yet, in spite of all the shopkeepers in Ballyowen."

"That was not a particularly wise message, Connor," said Mr. Daly to his son, as they strolled up to the house together. "Your mother settled this boy at Ballyowen to keep him out of your way, I strongly suspect. You'll only bring him to grief if you tempt him from his work."

"It's a horrid bore. If ever I take to any one of the boys in particular, my mother never rests till he's sent away. It all comes from Pelham's having sneered about my ragged regiment, when he was at home last. He never knows what it is to want companions; he has friends enough all the year round at Eton."

"Ah, you ought to have friends. You ought to have been at school years ago. Your mother is right there. We'll banish no more bare-legged gossoons for your sins, but send you out of the way yourself, sir!"

"I'd be glad enough to be doing something, only it need not be to an English school you send me. I would not like to come back such a prig as Pelham."

"Easy now. There's your mother beckoning to us to come in to breakfast. I wonder how long we have kept her waiting."

Mrs. Daly was already seated at the breakfast-table when her husband and children entered the room, and, as they approached her, she turned up a fair, thin, delicately-tinted cheek to receive the greeting kiss that each bestowed.

"I should not have called you in," she said quietly, addressing her husband, "but it is Tuesday—the day when I always expect a letter from Pelham—and the bag has been here half an hour. Won't you unlock it at once?"

"I think I'll fortify myself with a cup of coffee first. There's no saying that there mayn't be missives in that bag for me that even Pelham's effusions won't sweeten."

He carried the letter-bag off to his end of the table with rather a provoking smile; and an absolute quietness settled on Mrs. Daly's face—not vexation, or disappointment—only a sort of stillness that seemed to put out, as with an extinguisher, the glow of soft colour that had risen to her cheek as she spoke, and to turn her brown eyes into cold shining stones.

He sat watching her as she occupied herself silently with the business of the breakfast-table, her thin, jewelled fingers moving here and there among the cups with quick, precise motions; and as he watched, the same tender expression with which he had regarded Ellen stole into his face.

It was that dainty reserved grace, those still patient looks on the fair face, that had won his heart years ago, when he first left his rollicking Irish home, and became aware of some of its defects by the contrast afforded by the habits of the well-ordered English family among whom he met her.

She, with her considerate wise ways and gentle temper, was surely the remedy he wanted for the evils he saw and did not know how to combat; and if he felt a chill fall on him after he had won her calm acknowledgment of preference, he comforted himself with visions of a magical awakening into full responsive love and bright enjoyment of life that would be effected by her transportation into the warm, bright, loving atmosphere he meant to take her to. He had not quite done with dreams and visions about her yet, though to other people it was evident enough that several years of weak health and weary contention against disorders she could neither tolerate nor effectually control, had not tended to make a naturally plaintive temper less sad, or to reconcile an over-anxious heart to surroundings of gaiety that were a perpetual jar on its forebodings.

"Come, Eleanor, will you say something pleasant to me if I give you your letter at once?"

She would not let the corners of her mouth relax into the least glimmer of a smile as she answered—

"I really want it very much; that is all."

"Well, here it is, then, and may it reward you. Here's something too for you, Miss Eileen—a scrawl from Cousin Anne; that illegant home-made envelope, with the stamp upside down, can have come from no other place than 'Good People's Hollow and the queen of O'Flaherty witches' herself; and now"—crumpling up the remaining contents of the bag in his hand and making a grimace at it—"shall I put myself on the rack for three-quarters of an hour for no manner of use, or shall I toss these rascals at once into the fire without giving them leave to cudgel

my brains?" He made a motion as if to throw the papers on the fire, casting at the same time a comical look towards his wife, as if he expected her to interfere to prevent it. She was too much absorbed in her letter to heed him. It was Ellen who stole behind his chair and laid two detaining hands on his arms.

"Papa, I wish you would let me help you with your business letters. I could write for you sometimes when you don't like the trouble, and then people would not get angry by being kept waiting."

"Fine business it would be that you and I concocted together."

"I daresay it would be fine. Cousin Anne used to help her father in his business, We should be like them."

"No doubt we should; if we ever do set up in business together, it will be in Good People's Hollow fashion! Fine O'Flaherty schemes for weaving silk out of thistle-down, and making straw hats from wood shavings, you would drag me into! But don't raise your hopes; your mother will never let you get astride a broomstick and chase Will-o'-the-Wisps with your dear godmother. Does she send you any news of herself in that crazy-looking billet you have in your hand?"

"It is only to tell me that she has quite finished her model of the three-wheeled car that cannot possibly be overturned on the bad roads between the Hollow and Ballyowen, and that old Brian Lynch has undertaken to build one. It is to be ready before the next great Ballyowen Fair day, and she will be able to drive into the town and keep her own boys in order. 'There has been nothing but faction-fights and rows at Ballyowen on fair days, lately,' she says, just because she has not been able to look after her own people."

"Would not you like to be there to look after them, too, perched at Cousin Anne's side on this new Venus's car and drawing a tribe of ragged followers after you safe out of the way of faction-fights and whisky? We will have Pelham and your uncle Charles over from England to see the triumphal procession if that three-wheeled car ever gets built. Eh, mamma?"

The father and daughter had been so engrossed in their banter of each other, that they had not till now observed

a change of expression that had come over Mrs. Daly's face as she finished her letter.

The sheet had fallen from her hands to the ground, and she was leaning back in her chair with her fingers tightly locked together as if she were struggling for composure.

Mr. Daly sprang from his seat, and was in a minute kneeling by her side.

"My love, what has happened?—what have you heard? Something wrong with Pelham?—an accident to Pelham? Speak, you frighten me out of my senses!" And indeed his ruddy face became almost as pale as his wife's, as he watched the effort she made to command her voice to answer.

"I have done wrong to frighten you; you will think nothing of the news—it came suddenly on me at the end of the letter. Pelham has been ill; there has been a fever in the school, and he has taken it. My brother Charles went to Eton to see him—it is he who writes the news; he thinks that in a day or two he will be well enough to travel, and had better leave the infected air, but he does not want to take him to Pelham Court for fear of carrying infection to his own children; and he is doubtful what we should like to do about having him here. Dermot, I must be with Pelham."

"Of course you must, and so must I. Don't forget that he is my eldest son as well as yours. Of course he comes to us when he is ill—the Pelhams have not made him so altogether one of themselves but that this is his home when he wants one."

"But the other children—Ellen and Connor?"

"They must take their chance, or they can go to Happy-go-Lucky Lodge, unless you think a fortnight of unmitigated O'Flaherty worse than the chance of fever."

"And, dear mamma, there would be no danger for us," cried Ellen. "Why there is always fever, more or less, down in the village; and Connor and I go in and out of the cabins every day, you know."

"Pelham would have been as fever-proof if you had let him live at home. Castle Daly has some advantages, you see. Well, Eleanor, it will be something to cheer you up, and put the rest of us on our good behaviour, to have Pelham at home for the rest of the summer. I'll scribble

off a line to Charles without loss of time, and gallop off with the letter to catch the post-car when it stops at the next village on the road to Cong. You'll be easier in your mind when you know that the letter is on its way, and your boy certain to come to you."

CHAPTER II.

"Spinning under the Great-World Tree,
Yggdrasil, hover the Sisters three,
Glibly, heedlessly. Ha! but what pull'd
Just a thought astray there, the fingers of Skuld
A knot in the thread double gold, or a grey
In the sun-lighted doom? Either way
The Fate lingers an instant, whilst over our heads
She lifts to the sun that caprice in her threads
To see clearly, to shape it, perhaps, but the shade
Falls across our dim prescience, a Spirit hand laid
On our pulses that beat, now in hope, now in dread
Presentiments, shadows from Skuld's lifted thread."

Little Sealskin, and other Poems.

WHEN Mr. Daly returned from his rapid ride, he found his wife taking her daily number of constitutional turns up and down the sunniest walk of the flower-garden, which, by dint of much persevering effort, was kept up to a pitch of trimness and perfection that enabled her, while pacing it, occasionally to fancy herself transported back again to her old English home. This was rest to her spirit; if her eye had fallen on any token of neglect or disorder, such as she could not have failed to see at every step in any other part of the pleasure-grounds, the benefit of the walk would have been over for her, the fresh air and the sunshine would have lost all their sweetness, and she would have returned to the house as unrefreshed as she came out.

She was standing with her back to the mountains, looking with satisfaction at a neatly-dug flower-border, when her husband came up behind her.

"Ah, that was a good morning's work of Ellen's and mine. We shall turn out accomplished gardeners at your need."

"Yours and Ellen's! Why did you trouble yourselves? Where was Saunderson?"

"In the sulks. By the way, I did not intend to bring you face to face with the misfortune so soon; but the truth must come out sooner or later. Saunderson has taken himself off. He chose to turn away one of the under gardeners, and there was a general row in the place. I fancy his wife took fright at some threats against him, and carried him off by a *coup de main*; or else he heard of something very much to his advantage, for he took his departure suddenly."

"How long ago?"

"Five days. Come, confess that you have not missed your factotum yet?"

"I have only been out twice, and, Dermot, I had rather have known. I wish—I really wish that you would always tell me directly when anything disagreeable happens, then I should not live in constant dread of what I may hear."

"I did not know you lived in constant dread."

"I dreaded Saunderson's going for one thing—he was the only servant I could rely on for keeping order. He has had a hard life here among the other servants. I am not surprised he should go directly something better offered."

"No more am I; it was naturally nothing to him that he had been eighteen years in our service, and been more indulged and trusted than anyone else about the place. As an Englishman, he was bound to better himself. Why should he stick to the sinking ship like these poor benighted Paddies and Murdocks who leave their ragged coats on the rose bushes, and plant heads of celery among the geraniums? It would not have been becoming in him."

"Dermot, I wish you would not say such things."

"What things—against Englishmen?"

"No, about sinking ships. If you mean anything by it, I wonder you can say it so lightly; and if, after all, such speeches are only idle words, is it not cruel to be always dropping weights of apprehension on my heart?"

"I certainly don't mean to be cruel. You have not lived with me eighteen years without finding out that my speeches are not always to be taken *au pied de la lettre*. You must allow something for metaphor and the exigencies

of conversation, of which in your company I have to sustain the chief expense. And even if there is a spice of truth in the words, why should you trouble yourself so terribly? The ship struggles on anyhow, not sunk yet; and there's always good prospect of the wind changing and plenty of excitement in the struggle. I don't think I could put up with a life of plain sailing such as your brother Charles has before him. Something of a scramble comes more natural to me."

"And of all things that is what is most hateful to me."

"I am very sorry for it; but don't you think, as it is just that sort of existence I have unfortunately brought you to, you might soften the expression of your aversion a little? Your lips can drop weights as well as mine, though you don't seem to believe it."

They were now pacing the gravel walk, arm in arm; and as he finished the last sentence, he laid his hand tenderly over the slender fingers that rested on his arm, and looked fondly in her face.

Her eyes were fixed on the ground; but she felt the look, for a little tinge of colour came into her fair grave face, and the dark eyelashes that swept her cheek trembled.

"Dermot," she said at last, "will you do something for me that I wish very much?"

"Have I ever refused to do anything that you wished since the day that you owned me?"

"Not little personal things—in those I have had more indulgence than I cared for—but, oh, Dermot! I must say it: I have not had my wishes about the things near my heart—the management of the house, and the education of the children. You know that Ellen and Connor would not run wild as they do if I had my way, and that there would be other changes. I should think of the children's future welfare before everything."

"And curtail all your husband's present enjoyments!"

"And my own too."

"But, my dear, you have not any enjoyments except making yourself miserable. For my little Ellen's sake there is hardly any pleasure I would not give up; but, if anything effectual is to be done in the way of economising, I shall not be the chief sufferer. It will not be a question

of giving up pursuits and amusements merely, but of throwing over a number of people who have learned to depend on me, and will not do so well with anyone else."

"Because you have spoiled them."

"Granted; so much the more reason for not letting them suffer for my sins."

"Dermot, those are the old arguments we have gone through so often, when we have talked of these things together; they confirm me in a wish I am going to beg you to grant. But tell me first, did you post the letter?"

"Do you suppose I lost it on the road?"

"I supposed that, in thinking over Charles's letter, it might have occurred to you that there was no need for haste, and that it would be better to wait and write fully by to-morrow's post. Charles says that Pelham will not be fit to travel for some days; and he purposes to come to Ireland with him, and pay us a visit."

"Whew! that's a consequence of Pelham's fever I had not reckoned on."

"We owe him a great deal for his kindness to our son."

"Of course I shall give him a hearty welcome."

"I want you to do more. While I was walking up and down here, it seemed to come to me that this visit of my brother's—the first I have had from any of my family since I left England—would be the beginning of a new era to me. He will come with leisure to listen to our troubles, and consult with us on the state of our affairs; and, Dermot, if you would but open your heart to him—you know what he is in his own home and on his own estate."

"Perfectly well, and that he would not have the smallest hesitation in undertaking, at your request, to remodel this house and this estate on the same pattern. He would come back five years afterwards, confidently expecting to find it transformed into a district of Norfolk; and the Squireens (including your humble servant) and the Paddies behaving themselves like Norfolk farmers and labourers. He would, perhaps, give a little longer period for throwing the mountains into the lakes, and reducing all to sky and turnips."

"I always thought my brother was considered a particularly reasonable man."

"A much more reasonable man than your husband, I grant you, if you compare the actions of the two together."

"Oh, Dermot, the rest it would be to me if you would consent to consult Charles, and follow his advice! You are too——"

"Weak; never mind looking about for a word."

"Indeed, I was going to say good-natured, to bear to inflict what might seem, at first, hardships on people who prey upon you. You allow yourself that changes are necessary?"

"I allow that; I inherited misrule, and have let evils accumulate through sheer incapacity to see how to remedy them. If I thought Charles could really help me, I would listen to him gladly enough. There is some one nearer at hand, however, who seems to be solving some of my difficulties, in a native fashion, more congenial to the soil than anything Charles is likely to suggest. You won't easily forgive me for saying this, but if I were really to set about mending my ways, Cousin Anne would, I believe, be a safer person to take into my counsels than your brother. She is combating Irish evils with Irish virtues, and he knows nothing about either."

"You cannot mean it, Dermot. I should feel set aside indeed if Anne's advice were paramount in this house."

"You need not be afraid. She understands your feeling about her too well ever to be of any use to me now. She will never intrude where she is not wanted."

"And, Dermot, you cannot seriously believe that a woman like Anne, who really seems to me sometimes to be almost crazy, could give better advice than my brother?"

"She knows the people we have to deal with to the core of their hearts, and he would never know them."

"But she is a woman, and he is a man."

"Ah, but you see, you are also a woman, and I am a man—though, perhaps our being English woman and Irish man makes a difference in your estimate of the relative wisdom of our opinions."

"I have never, that I know of, set my opinion above yours."

"Well, no, I don't think you have; you only set your brother's and all your relations' opinions above mine. I think of the two, the other would have been easier to bear."

Never mind, my dear, you can't help it; most people would say you were quite right in your judgment of us, and I am not sure that I don't agree with you myself."

"You will consult Charles, then? If you knew how the undefined fear of coming trouble weighs me down; how the struggle after economies I can't carry out is wearing my life away—you would feel for me."

"I shall give you a pretty strong proof of how much I have been feeling for you all these years, if I take your brother for counsellor; and it will come to that, I suppose."

"Thank you, thank you; you won't go back from that word, Dermot? I shall be more at rest now than I have been since we married."

"That's something gained at all events."

"And during his visit, Charles will see a great deal of Connor and Ellen."

"And approve of them—of my little Ellen at least—if he means to keep me in good-humour."

"He will find her very different from his own daughters, I am afraid."

"Let him crow over her, on their behalf, as much as he pleases. I will not have my little one bullied. She has a warm heart, and a bright wit of her own, and I would not like to see them cowed and dulled by over-strict training. Don't shake your head at me, Eleanor. I have let you have your way about Pelham's education, and I am not saying it has not answered. He's had all the advantages you coveted for him, and been formed on your own models. I'm as proud of him as you are, but as for understanding him, or he me, he might as well be anyone else's son as mine. He has not been brought up in my ways, and he'll have no more illusions about me than you have. It is creditable to his understanding, no doubt, but fathers don't like to be too severely criticised by those who are to come after them. We shall get on together well enough, I dare say, when he comes home for good; but I shall know exactly how plainly he sees his father's incapacities, and how pat and ready he has all his plans for altering everything when his time comes. In due course it will come. I shall break my neck out hunting, or be shot from behind a hedge, by some poor wretch who adores me now because I let him alone; and who will have been educated into an

enemy under some new system of management. Pelham will do his duty better than I have done, I fully believe; and, from my heart, I hope his reign will come soon enough for you to have many years' enjoyment of it; but I think I should like there to be somebody to look back with foolish delusions to the old times. If I ever get back to wander about the place, I should like to hear some of the children say, 'It was after all the home of our hearts when he was in it.'"

"Indeed, Dermot, I cannot have you suppose that Pelham does not love you as dearly as do the others. He has, perhaps, a colder manner, but you should—indeed you should—teach yourself to believe that there are people who feel a great deal more than they can ever show—a great deal more!"

"Well, we will leave it there, then. What a delicious day it is! Won't you desert your pacing place for once, and take the walk by the lake you used to be so fond of—for the sake of old times?"

"That are going to change to better new times, I hope. It will be a new thing to me to spend a morning in taking a walk. I ought to go in and hear Ellen read, but I am in spirits to-day. I feel as if many new good things were to come from Pelham's return and this visit of Charles."

Ellen saw her father and mother set out on their walk from the schoolroom window, and was not sorry to perceive that the usual routine of her morning's occupations was not likely to be carried out. She threw away her book with an exclamation of glee, crossed her arms on the window-sill, and determined to begin the enjoyment of her holiday by giving herself up to what she called "a good think." She was ashamed to acknowledge it, even to herself, but she was very glad to escape the two hours' reading with her mother. She loved her mother and she loved reading, but somehow the two things did not go well together. She had thought it an honour when, two years ago, Mrs. Daly, wearied with changes between English governesses who disliked the country, and Irish governesses whose ways did not inspire her with confidence, had resolved to take her daughter's education into her own hands; but the arrangement had not worked well, and the lesson hours had come to be dreaded equally by teacher and pupil

Ellen always came to the end of them with a painful sense of her own incapacity and folly, and of the utter uselessness of attempting to attain her mother's standard of perfection in anything. Yet to win that mother's approval had been from her earliest childhood the very strongest wish of her heart. She adored her father, but her mother was her conscience—the high, incorruptible judge whose praise, hard to be won, she would have gone through fire and water to gain. She built castles in the air about winning this approval, as other maidens build castles about winning friends and lovers. In her thoughts she had been everything and done everything for her mother that a girl could do or be. She had saved her life over and over again ; she had stood by her side when fortune and friends had failed her ; she had nursed her through terrible sicknesses ; and from these dreams again and again she had been awakened to meet well-merited reproof for little acts of disobedience and forgetfulness that could not be atoned for to Mrs. Daly by any amount of passionate feeling. “It is not caresses and protestations of love I want from you, Ellen,” Mrs. Daly would say, with that sad look in her eyes that was a stab to poor Ellen's heart ; “it is only a little thought.” And all the time it seemed to Ellen as if her shortcomings were the direct result of excess of thought. If she had cared less passionately for her mother, and had fewer schemes for pleasing her, she believed she should have made fewer mistakes and remembered the little things better. Yet surely there must be some way of transmuting love into service, if only one could discover it ? It could not be the cold hearts that did their work best. Now, to-day, it seemed as if a chance of coming at the solution of the problems she had so often meditated was coming to her. This brother, whom her mother loved entirely, who was just what she wished him to be, he would be the interpreter whose perfections would make plain what it was that was deficient in herself ; he should be the model on which she would earnestly endeavour to mould her thoughts and actions.

She strained her memory to recall sayings and doings of his in former visits that could be made to yield ground for her hopes. She had been almost a child when he was last at home, but—yes—certainly he had always been kind to

her. He had lifted her carefully on and off her pony many times, and he had been very angry with Connor for frightening her with a gun one day when they were all out in a boat together. Ah, but how sorry she had been for having brought that anger on Connor! She remembered how Pelham's eyes flashed when he wrested the gun from Connor's obstinate hands, and how he had sat quiet and grave all the rest of the time they were in the boat, with his arm round her, as if he were still afraid of her being hurt—turning a deaf ear to the jokes Connor perpetrated, with a view of carrying off his defeat and his little fit of rebellion with a high hand. She must never do such a thing as that again; never let herself be made a cause of dissension between the brothers. Now she recalled that look on Pelham's face, she could fancy herself learning to watch him when talk and laughter were going on, to see if he were pleased or vexed, as anxiously as she watched her mother.

She must learn to be wise enough to say herself, and cause others to say, the right things, and ward off the little jars and sneers that made everyone unhappy. Yet if there were so many people to watch, would it ever be possible to breathe freely again? Ellen drew a deep breath, and lifted up her head from her hands as she reached this point in her meditation and met her mother's eyes, who on coming from her walk had paused at the school-room door.

"My dear Ellen, have you really spent the whole morning in looking out of the window? Will the time ever come when I can trust you to find useful occupation for yourself when I am busy? It will be a great rest to me if it ever does."

CHAPTER III.

" . . . much good might be sucked from these beggars. "They were the oldest and honourablest form of pauperism. Their appeals were to our common nature; less revolting to an ingenuous mind than to be a suppliant to the particular humours or caprices of any fellow-creature or set of fellow-creatures, parochial or sectarian."—ELIA.

It was found that a week must elapse before the expected visitors could arrive at Castle Daly; and Mr. Daly, in order to undo any suspicion that might linger in his wife's mind as to his hospitable feeling towards her brother

busied himself with preparations for his reception and entertainment on a lavish scale, which struck Mrs. Daly as decidedly inconsistent with the project she hoped was to be the main feature of the visit.

He made several journeys up and down the country to procure horses such as he considered creditable to the establishment, for his guest and eldest son to ride and drive. He had the yacht, which was in constant use by the family for excursions on the lake, refitted, and the crew supplied with new clothes with the Daly badge. He overlooked his cellars, and added to his stock of choice wines. He sent out invitations far and near, for dinner parties and excursions. He suggested to Connor that it would be well to employ his ragged regiment of gossoons, hangers-on of hangers-on, in preparing bonfires at all the available points, to be fired on the evening of the arrival just as the travellers entered the grounds. He dropped hints of the expected arrival among his people, which he knew would bear fruit in the shape of assembled crowds and enthusiastic tumult of welcome.

"At all events," he said to his wife, "we'll give them a thoroughgoing Irish welcome, with all the honours, if it's the last time a Daly ever does it in this place."

"I must say I think it quite unnecessary," Mrs. Daly answered. "I do not think that it will even please Charles, and surely it will be very inconsistent with what you have to tell him of the state of your affairs?"

"Oh, but it *will* please him. I've always observed that your well-to-do, prudent people, who poison every pleasure for themselves by calculating its cost, are glad enough to take their fling of enjoyment with friends who have the heart to put the dirty thought of the money out of their heads. They throw the reproach of extravagance in their teeth when all's over, but they take to the fun kindly at the time. You'll see Charles will. I'm not going to borrow money of him to pay for his entertainment—he knows that. I may have to go down the ladder a long way, but not to that depth. We—at least the Irish faction of us, Ellen and Connor and I—would die in a ditch first."

"Dermot, forgive me for saying it, but you know such words as those are mere talk. Charles is a great deal too

much attached to me to see any of us reduced to need without coming forward to help us. And if you were gone and the children left unprovided for, it is on him they must depend."

"Ah, there you have me! That's the sting. You are really a very clever woman, my dear, whether you pretend to it or not. That's the point of the lance by which you are driving me to sit down in the hornets' nest I have made for myself, and submit to the stings. Right you are, not to spare to use it. However, don't be uneasy about this last flare-up of the dying light in the socket; it won't count for much. Let your brother see us in our glory, and enjoy himself just for once."

"You don't love him so dearly, Dermot, that you should commit imprudences for his sake."

"No hoodwinking you, I see, Eleanor. I did think perhaps that you would have taken it kindly that I should treat your brother just as I would treat one of my own if I had one; but it's true enough, it is not altogether his taste I'm consulting. I want to put a little heart and life into Pelham's home-coming this time. I'd like him to feel for once that, let him have been brought up where he may, he is eldest son here, and that so the people think of him. The recollection of what he is to them might stay with him for ever afterwards. I shall never forget the morning I came of age, and the welcome I got. It will be warm about my heart when I die, let me come by my death where and how I will."

"But Pelham will not be of age for three years; would it not have been wiser to put off any demonstrations you think it right to make for him till then?"

"Wiser, perhaps, but then the demonstrations might never have been made. We shall all have been re-modelled and grown too sober to enjoy ourselves before another three years are out. It won't do Pelham any harm for once to feel the stir of the *ould* life, and the *ould* warm feelings. If Charles thinks the enthusiasm is all meant for himself, take my word for it he'll laugh at us in his sleeve, but he'll like it."

Mr. Daly was not mistaken in his estimate of his brother-in-law's humour.

The hospitable, lavish, easy-going, pleasure-seeking ways

of the Irish household were as utterly foreign to Sir Charles Pelham's practice and habits as Mrs. Daly was aware they must be, but they did not strike upon him so unpleasantly as they had done on her when she came to take up her abode for life among them. He had come out for a holiday with a comfortable sense of having done a noble thing in the care he had bestowed on his nephew during his illness, and it did not seem amiss to him that some rather signal tokens of appreciation of his devotion should be shown. It was of course all very Irish, the bonfires, the shouts, the wild ragged crowd that beset the carriage a mile before it reached its destination, and insisted on dragging him and his nephew, at the peril of their lives, down the steep descent to Castle Daly. It was a laughable, perhaps a pitiable, display, but it was a thing to have seen once. It would give him something to talk of on his return home, and with the other experiences of his visit, lend a certain authority to his utterances when he held forth on Irish questions to his English friends. He was not at all disposed to take it amiss that his brother-in-law should have bestowed some pains on making his welcome so truly national. The person who *was* disposed to take it amiss was the tall, dark-eyed, gentleman-like-looking lad of eighteen, who sat far back in the carriage with his hat well slouched over his eyes during the triumphal progress, and who seemed, for the two hours and a-half during which it lasted, to be intently occupied in efforts to keep his handsome head so exactly straight between his shoulders, that neither the men with grinning faces, who poked their heads in at the window of the carriage on the right, nor the women with up-turned eyes and hands raised in blessing to the left, should have reason to suppose that he had inclined a quarter of an inch their way.

Sir Charles, who had been considerably startled, not to say frightened, at the first on-rush of the crowd, and who till he was fairly in sight of Castle Daly, was never quite comfortably sure that this was not a Ribbon riot he had got among, was scrupulous in taking off his hat at regular intervals, and muttering a word or two in answer to the jokes and exclamations of his wild welcomers. But Pelham only opened his lips once or twice to reply rather contemptuously to Sir Charles's anxious whispers, "You are

sure it's all right, Pelham, eh?"—"You don't think there's any mischief brewing, eh?"—whenever they came in sight of a new beacon-light glaring from an overhanging precipice or when the joyous tumult round the carriage threatened to degenerate into a fight, through the determination of those who were behind to push themselves into a position to gain a nearer view of its occupants.

He was disgusted with his uncle for being uneasy. It was another element of ridicule in the proceeding; and oh! what a fool he felt, sitting up there without the chance of escape, while a crowd of grinning men and horrible gaunt old women stared at him and passed remarks among each other upon his growth and his good looks! If he had not understood every word they said, Irish as well as English, it would have mattered less. The struggle to keep his head still and his eyes staring steadily straight before him might have been relaxed, if he could have avoided catching, every now and again, a familiar word, a phrase, a sweet tone among the hubbub, that in spite of himself quickened his heart-beats suddenly, and exposed him to the horrible danger of finding that his dignity and reserve were sliding away from him, and that he, sixth-form Eton fellow as he was, might be reduced to the point of sharing the laughing, weeping, shouting, hand-shaking excitement of the idiots round him. He could hardly bear to believe in such a possibility; but a something that came in his throat, and the disgusting tendency his eyes had to wink and smart as if there were tears in them, put him upon his mettle and gave him resolution to preserve the wooden attitude of his countenance through all the appeals that met his ears.

"Slure it's himself thin. Blessings on the day I see him agin, though it's nothing but a lock of his jet-black hair, that bates the world for beauty, that brightens me eyes yet. Misther Pelham, dear, I'm trying har. to get at ye, but the boys won't let me at all. I'm ould Molly Tully, the first nurse ye iver had, avourneen, who had ye in my arms before yer own mother, and did what was right by ye—wid the Holy Water—and tuck ye upstairs afore ye iver was down, that I might see ye rise in grandeur a step for ivery year of yer life, and niver forgetting ould friends in the height of the good luck that'll come to ye."

"Misther Pelham, yer honour, this way—give a turn of yer eyes this way—and ye'll see one that's thought of ye night and day since ye was gone, me wid the red hair—Dennis Malachy—Hill Dennis, the boys call me. Shure yer honour'll never have forgotten me, that picked ye out of the bog when ye was a little slip of a gossoon, and had lost yer way, and was crying fit to break yer heart. Don't ye mind how I carried ye home on my shoulder dripping wet, wid yer hands clutching hold of me hair, that has not lost the feel of yer fingers through it yet? Bad luck to ye, Murdock O'Toole, for pushing me back just as his honour was going to catch sight of me. I'll niver believe it's not glad to see me he'd be, once he knew I was in it; but how should he smile on us, boys, whin some of ye behave so badly, and won't let those come near that has the best right? It's ashamed of us, his honour is, bad luck to us for not knowing how to plase him better."

"And he the eldest son of the Daly, sitting up there wid grand shoulders such as his father's son should have, and a face that bates all Ireland for eauty."

"Ah, here we are at last, thank God," cried Sir Charles, fervently. "There's the house not a hundred yards away. It's all very well to have seen such a thing as this for once, but I confess I shall not be sorry to find myself safe indoors, nor will you—eh, Pelham?—to judge by your face."

"There never was any chance of our not getting safe," answered Pelham. "The noise has been enough to split one's head; that was all there was to complain of. I saw the house half an hour ago, at the turn of the road."

He had been thinking that it had looked more like a real home when he had caught sight of it on the same spot three years before, at the beginning of his last visit, in the course of which he had painfully discovered how much of a stranger among them all his long absence and his different training had made him. If only he had never gone away or never need come back, he sighed to himself!

There was his father standing out on the door-step, bare-headed, his tall figure and ruddy face seen distinctly by the glare of the torches and beacons, actually making a speech to the crowd that had now surged round the door, exchanging jokes and hand-shakes with the wildest-looking among them. Should he be expected to say or do

anything while this horrible struggle between shyness and excitement was oppressing all his faculties like a nightmare? It was too bad. He resolved that he would not speak a word or give a look to anyone till he was safe inside the house. He got off better than he expected. His father came to meet him as he alighted from the carriage, put his hands on his shoulders, and looked in his face for half a minute. That was perhaps the worst ordeal of all. Pelham let his eyes drop to the ground, for he did not know what he should be obliged to say or do if he let them fairly meet the wistful gaze that seemed to be trying to read his heart and begging him to give in to the feeling of the moment. After all, what business was it of the staring, gaping people round, how he met his father after a few years' absence? What could he do but look down?

"Well, my boy, go in to your mother—she is waiting for you," Mr. Daly said. And then at last the door closed behind the new-comers, while Mr. Daly and Connor stayed without to entertain and thank and dismiss their escort.

It was all over; but Pelham could not help asking himself all the evening why he could not have had a pleasant, unostentatious, matter-of-fact reception, such as he had shared with his cousins year after year at Pelham Court. A little fuss, a little excitement among the women-kind; that was only tribute due to sons and brothers and male cousins, but no such outrages on dignity and feeling as the ordeal he had undergone. He could not forgive it all at once.

He had come home with one or two articles of English schoolboy faith strongly worked into his mind. One was that people who talked about or in any way displayed their feelings were humbugs, and had not really any feeling at all; another that there was something actually insulting to a gentleman in having any personal remark, much less a compliment, addressed to him by an inferior. Unfortunately at Castle Daly these principles were liable to be outraged every day.

With the exception of his mother, no member of the household ever thought of concealing his or her feelings, or scrupled to make claims upon other people's; and inside the house as well as out his steps were liable to be dogged by a crowd of hangers-on, who thought an exaggerated

style of flattery a natural form of address from them to him.

It passed his comprehension how Ellen and Connor could let themselves be talked to, and joked with, and wheedled by the idlers who hung about the house. He was disposed to be friendly with his brother and sister. He had felt lonely at Pelham Court when the brothers and sisters there introduced him to their friends as "Our cousin from Ireland," and he had fancied he was looked at critically. It was in some respects a pleasant change to have belongings of his own, but he was puzzled to discover any common ground for conversation between himself and creatures whose habits and tastes were formed on such a different model. It was far from him to make any display of his school learning, which, indeed, was not anything remarkable, and he was quite content to say to himself that Connor's education was no business of his; but with his Eton notions he could not always conceal his contempt for the desultory haphazard fashion in which his brother's studies were carried on, nor his dislike to what he considered the pedantic display of out-of-the-way knowledge in which he and Ellen occasionally indulged. It disgusted him immensely to hear them talking eagerly by the hour together of the exploits of kings and heroes with breakjaw names, of whom no civilized person had ever heard, or to see them walking up and down the hall, with their arms around each other's necks, vehemently spouting rhymes which Connor (who could not have put a decent Latin verse together to save his life) had been fool enough to compose. Pelham's notion of learning was, that it was a thing to be acquired by gentlemen in fit places at proper times, and being once acquired, the right course for a gentleman was diligently to conceal or forget it, and never on any pretext to make it a subject of conversation or display. It was a great shock to his feelings to find that he had a brother capable not merely of writing ballads on ancient Irish history for his own amusement, but of spouting them publicly to a miscellaneous audience, of grooms, under-gardeners, runners, helpers and beggars, and of deriving pleasure and consequence from their assurances "that it was himself that was the great, grand poet intirely, and had the trick wid the words that would make all the hearts in Ireland bate to hear him."

Three years ago he had thought Connor something of a spoilt cub, whom it would take a great deal of public school discipline to lick into shape, but this assumption of the character of national poet was a worse feature in his case than Pelham was prepared for. He no longer cordially wished his younger brother to be sent back with him to Eton, so fully convinced was he that he would only make a fool of himself and of everyone connected with him there and everywhere.

There was, however, brotherly feeling enough in Pelham's heart to make him sorry to come to this conclusion, and to induce him to attempt once or twice to lay his disgust before his mother, the one person in the house who appeared to him capable of hearing reason.

She took his complaints much more deeply to heart than he had at all intended her to do, and dropped so many sad little hints of yet more serious troubles and apprehensions weighing on her mind, that he was chilled and silenced. He was ready enough to find fault in a small way, and to fret himself about disagreeables that he could hope to see altered, but at the bottom of his heart he did love this incongruous disappointing Irish home very dearly, and serious fears about its well-being he had no wish to entertain. He had been used to hear his uncle burst out every now and then in an invective against his father's extravagance and general incapacity to manage his own affairs, and he had made it a point of conscience to disbelieve every word. It would be a most disagreeable result of this holiday visit if serious distrust and disapprobation of home doings were forced upon him.

Pelham had the more time to allow uncomfortable thoughts to grow in his mind because, after the first few days, he was not able to take part in the outdoor amusements and pleasure parties planned for his uncle's entertainment. He took cold, and had a slight return of fever, after a boating party on the lake, and was obliged to be content to remain in the house with his mother, while the rest of the party were enjoying themselves abroad.

After a dull day he was not always in a mood to enter into Connor's histories of his own and his father's wonderful feats with gun or fishing-rod, and was often glad to take refuge in his uncle's dressing-room, the only place

where Connor or Ellen were safe not to hunt him out, and listen to a more sober account of the day's proceedings. It was almost certain to be mixed up with comments and reflections that fell on Pelham's irritated mind like so many little blows; but a certain vague restlessness, kept alive by the sight of his mother's sad face, made him persist in putting himself in the way of hearing what pained him.

"Well," Sir Charles would begin, as he stood warming his back at the little wood fire that the damp climate made acceptable of evenings in summer, before he commenced his toilette for the very late dinner, "so I hear, four of the officers from Ballyowen barracks dine here again to-day. Very pleasant fellows, no doubt; but they drink a monstrous deal of claret. If I were your father I should be satisfied to have their company once in three months, instead of three times a week; but, I suppose, to keep open house, and never have a quiet evening, is what is called Irish hospitality. There ought to be a gold mine under the cellar to pay for it; that's all I've got to say. One thing is quite clear to me, however—it's not out of the land that money to keep up this style of living comes, or ever will come, while the estate is managed as it is at present by your father's precious old fogie of a bailiff, O'Roone. I can't make out whether that man is most knave or fool; but, anyhow, he deserves to be hanged for the state he and your father between them have let the land get into. I know something about land, if I know nothing else."

"But my father owns a great deal of land. You can't ride over his property in a morning as you can over"—Pelham hesitated, seeing a slight look of disgust cross his uncle's face—"over a moderate property in England, you know."

"I tell you—small or great—I would not take the whole as a gift, saddled with O'Roone, and with all the stupid incapable people your father has got hanging about. We have been across the lake to-day, riding over some farms that belong to your father, in the flat country where your grandfather built a hunting-lodge. O'Roone lives there now—a big rambling place; it must have cost a fortune to keep it up in the style your father says it was kept up

in when he was a boy. When I think of what that money would have been bringing in now, if it had been spent in draining and improving the land, instead of being absolutely fooled away, I am amazed at the want of common sense that seems to run in some families. But, by all accounts, your grandfather was no worse than his neighbours—his house was not the only place where fortunes were fooled away. We rode home through a country split up into potato farms, where the people were actually burning the soil, because they've no manure to put in, and could not afford to let the ground lie fallow for a season. I'd heard of the ruinous practice before, but could hardly believe it possible till I saw the reek of the smoke along the hill-side. Well, while I was expressing pretty strongly to your father my opinion of such a system, and urging him to make a stand against it, we passed a good-sized mansion-house, actually in ruins—iron gates swinging wide on their hinges, and pleasure-grounds dank and overgrown, with a flock of mangy sheep feeding where the flower-garden had been. O'Roone rode up to my side, and volunteered to tell me the history of the last occupier of the place. I don't know whether he meant anything in particular by it, but it was just then I noticed the look on his face that made me wonder whether he really was the stupid old fogie one takes him for at first. Anyway, the story sounded like a warning, and I feel a shiver when I think of it now, though perhaps the wetting I got in the shower crossing the lake is to blame for that. One's never safe in this climate. It seems a family called Lynch once lived there. A great friend of your grandfather's the old fellow was—imitated him in all his follies, and not having so much to justify him in extravagance, he died leaving his affairs in a worse plight. There were two sons. The eldest—no more enterprising than the most of these Connaught landlords seem to be—slunk off to live on a pittance abroad; but the younger was a clever lad, who had been brought up in England, and he determined to have a struggle to keep the estate in the family. He persuaded the creditors to let him have the management of the property, and set to work in good earnest to make the tenants pay their rents and do justice to their land, or leave it for those who would. He got on so well that in

about ten years he had scraped enough money together to pay off the principal part of the debts. A day was fixed for a meeting of creditors, and he wrote to his brother to come home. But meanwhile he had made himself enemies; there was a conspiracy against him among the old tenants whom for their idleness he had been obliged to eject from their farms. Fourteen rascals swore to have his life, and on the very evening before the day when his brother was expected home to pay off the creditors and take possession of the estate, when he had lain down to sleep full of the triumph the next day would bring, the house was surrounded by a crowd of wretches with blackened faces, fire was set to the doors, and he was shot dead as he was trying to escape from a window. That was the welcome the elder brother got when he arrived at his old home early in the morning—a house in ruins, and the dead body of his brother stretched before the threshold. I wish I could forget the leer there was in that fellow O’Roone’s eyes as he finished his story—I didn’t like it. It was a great deal too much like saying, ‘See what comes of meddling fellows interfering with the customs of the country.’ Of course it’s no business of mine; it’s only for your sake, Pelham, my lad, that I take upon me to advise your father, but I feel it will come hard upon you. Unless you grow up a different man from what I expect, you will never let things go on as they are now. You could not do it. And it will be a cowardly thing of your father if he leaves the onus of the changes to rest with you, when he himself has a sort of popularity that would help him to carry them through.”

“My father could not do a cowardly thing,” cried Pelham, blushing hotly. “If he refuses to make changes, you may be quite sure it is not fear of danger that keeps him back.”

“No, no; I don’t suppose it is myself, but that is how I shall put the case when I talk over his affairs with him, as I have promised your mother to do on the first opportunity. When a fit time for such a conversation will come I can’t say, for every moment is so taken up with pleasure here there is no time for business. It is all agreeable enough. I don’t know that I ever was better entertained, or had better sport, and I shall always say I am

very glad I came and saw it all. I understand the country now, at all events, and know why it does not prosper. No one ever need talk before me again of justice to Ireland, or the need of improved legislation. I'll never believe it can signify what sort of laws you make for a people who expect to get crops out of the soil without manuring it, and who in doubtful weather stand—six or seven of them—gaping round a hay-cart, without attempting to fill it, as I've seen since I came here. If you could give people common sense and industry by law, then there might be some good in talking."

CHAPTER IV.

"Now when a man's servant shall play the our with him—look you, it goes hard."—LAUNCE.

As the days passed on, Mrs. Daly began to fear that her husband, with his usual disposition to put off evil times, would allow the whole of her brother's visit to expire without ever permitting himself and his guest for a single hour to be sufficiently at leisure to give opportunity for the conversation on which she had set her heart. The sunshine and the clouds seemed to conspire against her wishes by bringing the kind of weather which gives people an excuse for saying, "We must spend this one more day out of doors; for, bright as it is now, there are signs of a change coming."

It was a positive relief to her to wake one morning and look out on a distance of cloud wreaths, which seemed to have blotted lake and mountains from the world, and left only a narrow circle of sodden road and drenched shrubbery between earth and heaven.

Two middle-aged men shut into a house by walls of drenching rain could hardly pass an entire day together without getting into discourse on business matters of some sort; certainly not when one of them had such a talent for managing his own and his neighbours' affairs as had Sir Charles Pelham.

Mrs. Daly saw by the expression on her husband's face, and by the gesture with which he threw away the end of

his cigar on the doorstep before entering the house, as he and her brother returned with dripping waterproofs from their morning round of visits to dogkennels and stables, that the confidential talk had begun already; and she watched them as they shut themselves into the study with an anxious heart. She suffered a great deal more from thinking of the pain it would cost her husband to say much that he would have to say that morning than she could have managed to make him believe. Her disapproval of his extravagance had been a vexed question between them for so many years, that it had built up a wall of coldness and reserve round her that it would cost her a great deal to break through now. The prison might be of her own building, but she was a close captive in it all the same, and could not get out. He thought it was only her English prudence that was outraged by his reckless doings, and that all her horror over them rose from fears for the future with which his own sanguine temper could little sympathize. She had another way of looking at his conduct. Her heart as well as her conscience was wounded by the failure of her efforts to alter what she disapproved. She could not help asking herself, "what can the love be worth of which he speaks so much, if it cannot induce him to make the little efforts of self-control that I should value so much more than any other token of affection?" She did not know it was the whole nature she wanted changed. She thought it was just a few actions that might easily be regulated so as to satisfy her requirements.

This was the thought that for years had been a chill wind blowing through her heart, stiffening all her feelings with an ice covering of reserve; so that now she could not go down and sit by his side holding his hand, and claiming a share of the pain and blame he had brought on himself. She could only go up to the solitude of her own room and spend the morning pacing up and down, clasping and unclasping her pale hands as in imagination she went through the conversation going on below, and pictured to herself the looks of astonishment that would come on her brother's face; the little shrugs and exclamations of disgust that would escape from him as the story went on; longing all the time that she could in some invisible way make herself into a shield to ward this vexation from her husband. He

had looked up at her as he followed her brother into the library, with a little nod and a smile as nearly bitter as a smile of his could be, which seemed to say: "Yes, you have your own way at last; this is your triumph. I hope you are satisfied." And in reality, though no one would ever know it, it was an hour of bitterer pain and humiliation to her than to him.

While the elders of the family were thus occupied in their own quarters, a desultory holiday-kind of feeling pervaded the rest of the house. No special plan for amusement or occupation had been pointed out for that rainy day, and consequently everybody took the congenial course of doing nothing. The servants, out-door and in, congregated round the great kitchen fire; and, in spite of the deep-mouthed remonstrances of a favourite bulldog of Pelham's, sent to him from England, and installed a day or two ago as guardian of the back-yard, invited such of the passers-by as were likely to repay hospitality by gossip to come in and taste the warmth. The first word of each dripping figure after the pause on the threshold that was occupied by the customary "God save all here" and the "kindly welcome," was naturally a question on the sudden appearance of this unwelcome obstacle to free coming and going, and an invective against his energy.

"Shure I knew he was a stranger and a *furriner* from the moment whin his ugly voice troubled me ears. There's not a dog big or little in all Galway that 'ud drame of barking at me," remarked one-eyed Kitty, the most audacious beggar of the neighbourhood, whom even Mr. Daly had forbidden the house, indignantly displaying, as she spoke, to the general view the corner of her dragged red cloak that had a new rent across it. "It might have been me leg that the cratur cotched hould of. Will I niver again ate me plate of praties and drink me noggin of milk in pace and quietness in me ould corner by the sunny edge of the wall, that's been by rights the beggars' corner since a Daly reigned in the place? An' now the murthering dog's kennel is put full in front of it. Boys and girls, somethin' must be done or a curse'll rest on ye all—driving the poor from yer doors in this new fashion."

"You'll have to make friends wid the dog, Kitty," answered James Morris, a young groom in special favour

with Connor ; "for it's none of us can get him banished. The thundering big brute belongs to Mr. Pelham, the young squire, who has lately come home from England, and colloquies more wid his English dog than wid any Christian soul here. Word or look can boy or girl get from him—only his dog will be open his lips to ; and is it likely now he'd give up for your convenience the only cratur he's capable of conversing wid ?"

"And he a Daly ! the saints be betwixt us and harm."

"The dog's a stranger anyhow ; and maybe the air of the cuntry'll be altogether too damp to shuit his constitution. It'll be the death of him, ye'll see, boys, sooner or later ; the rain and the attintion he'll get from those that have a better right than he to come and go about the place ; so be aisy about him, boys," concluded, with a cunning wink of his eye, old Phelim, the pedlar, who, already established in the most comfortable seat in the chimney corner, was slowly undoing the straps of his pack, and preparing for the display of goods and the commencement of the barter and bargaining which was designed agreeably to wile away the idle morning.

In the old school-room at the top of the house, where the younger members of the family congregated, the tongues did not wag quite so merrily.

Pelham had been driven, by the deserted state of the down stairs sitting-rooms, to betake himself for the first time since his return to his brother's and sister's sanctum ; and he fancied that Ellen and Connor, as they hastily crumpled up a sheet of paper over which their heads were bent when he came in, exchanged looks that showed he was not welcome.

"I can go down stairs again, if you are talking secrets," he said. "I only came here to write a letter ; though what on earth you two can find to talk about all day I can't imagine."

"Oh, it is nothing," said Ellen ; "I only hurried this paper away because you say you hate poetry. We ought not to be talking now. Connor has his work to do, and so have I. Do stay and write here. You can have this half of the table, and I will take my books to the window and sit there."

Pelham's letter was one which he considered required

thought and careful wording, and its composition did not tend to put him into a good humour. A school friend whom he had employed to manage the transfer of his dog from its quarters near Eton to Ireland, had in his last letter put him in mind of an invitation to spend a vacation in Ireland, which he had long ago rashly given, and dropped a hint that, as his family were now abroad, the next two months would be the most convenient possible time for him to make such a visit. Pelham had spent more than one of his vacations from school at the pleasant country home of this friend, and he had often spoken to him of the pleasure he knew it would give his father to return the hospitality. Yes, and he was right in saying that it would give his father pleasure. As Pelham sat biting the end of his pen and staring blankly at the first line of the letter, he saw in his mind's eye exactly the sort of reception that would be given; his friend would be made thoroughly at home; he would hear all the family talk; he would see all the family ways; there would be no restraint, no reticence; he would be made quite one of themselves, and what would he think of it all—Connor's wild ways; his father's and Ellen's random chatter; the servants' familiarity; the slipshod grandeur of the establishment? And side by side with this rose the picture of the quiet, trim household from which his friend came; the dignified, silent father; the brisk, capable mother; the clock-like regularity of meals; the noiseless domestics; the awe-inspiring group of pretty sisters always smiling, well dressed, and occupied under the governess's or mother's wing. What was the great difference between them and Ellen? He raised his eyes from his letter to study her, as she sat curled up on the floor in the window recess, with a large book she was not reading open on her lap, and her dreamy blue eyes gazing up towards the window. Was it that quantity of yellow hair always tumbling over her shoulders, or what was it made her so unlike the quiet, low-voiced, nothing-speaking, well-governessed type of young ladyhood he had taken into his mind as the standard of excellence? Ah, what is she doing now?—the blue eyes have wakened up—no medium with her between absolute idleness and movements that take away one's breath. She has thrown up the window wide,

and any possibility of continuing his letter is snatched away from Pelham by the irritation of having to listen to a dialogue shouted between a frieze-coated man at the front gate, and Ellen with her golden-haired head out of the window.

"Good morning, Thady M'Quick. I saw you did not like to pass the gate without a word from some one. You are taking the young pigs you told me about to sell at Ballyowen fair, I see. I wish you the height of good luck in your bargaining."

"Hurrah, thin! It's Miss Eileen her own self—the jewel of the world—that's spaking to me!" responded the voice from the gate. "An' if the hought of good luck don't come to me this day, it'll only be becasse luck, they say, is a famale, and, maybe, won't forgive Miss Eileen for bating her out and out in beauty. Anyhow, the pigs, poor bastes, have seen ye for the last time, and that's luck enough for thim and me."

"Well, good morning, Thady. You must make haste, or you'll be late at the fair; and Connor and I will come round by your cabin to-morrow to hear how you fared."

There was a great sound of *hurrishing* and loud squeaking of the pigs. The procession must be moving on. Surely she will draw in her head now, and shut the window!

But no; something fresh had caught her eye. Regardless of the rain that was drenching her hair, she stretched her head further yet, so as to gain a view round the corner of the gable, and when she drew back into the room again, it was with an exclamation of dismay. "Oh, Connor dear, I wish you would go down and see what is going on in the yard. That horrid dog of Pelham's is barking furiously at Murdock Malachy, who is trying to slip past him into the yard by the side gate. Do go down and see what he wants."

"He's bringing me the swans' eggs I told him to get for me, no doubt. He's a broth of a boy, that Murdock. Send him the least taste of a message, and the thing's done. Well, I'll go down, but it will be for the sixth time this morning. I'll tell you what it is, Pelham: you'll have to get rid of that dog Lictor of yours; he's in everybody's way."

"He's only in the way of people who come where they have no right to be. My father said that side gate was always to be kept locked."

"But it never will be kept locked. It is a great deal too convenient for people who want to slip in on the sly. I shall go down and stop that howling by shutting Lictor up in the stable for this morning, at least."

"You will do no such thing," said Pelham, testily. "The dog's mine, and I won't have him spoilt. He's been trained for a house dog, and he shall not be punished for barking at beggars. Sit still where you are, and mind your own business, and let him do his. You said you had work to do."

"Is it your business to see that I do my work, pray?"

"I shall make it my business to see that you don't spoil my dog."

"And I shall see that the horrid brute is hindered from hurting anyone."

"Oh, boys, don't quarrel, whatever you do!" cried Ellen.

"Sit down, and don't be a fool, Connor," said Pelham, taking up his pen to continue his letter, as if the matter were ended.

"Yes, be easy, Connor dear," whispered Ellen. "I'll put my head out of the window, and, though the wind is high, perhaps I shall be able to make Murdock understand that he is to go round the other way."

A burst of wind and rain came in at the open window, and with them the sound of a low, fierce growl, and a wail of fear or pain, that made even Pelham start up and throw down his pen.

"The fools have worried the poor brute till they have made him savage," he muttered to himself. "I suppose I must go down, or some harm will come of it."

Connor and Ellen were, however, beforehand with him in reaching the scene of action. They rushed impetuously past him down the stairs and through the offices into the dripping court-yard, while he followed with the more deliberate step of a person making up his mind how to act. He had chosen the position of the dog's kennel himself, and decided on the length of the chain, against the vociferously-expressed advice of half a dozen servants, who, without his consent, had thrust themselves into the discussion;

and he could not help feeling convinced that this catastrophe, if it had not been planned, would certainly be made the very most of by his discarded advisers for the sake of triumphing over him.

The hubbub that was going on in the yard when he arrived there confirmed the irritating suspicion. The talkative crowd in the kitchen had emptied itself bodily into the court-yard and divided into two surging, shouting, gesticulating groups. Five or six men and as many boys, with faces expressive of real or assumed horror, had surrounded the dog. Two of the most courageous had their hands clutched in his collar, and were dragging him down to the ground. One held on to his tail, and the remainder at a safe distance flourished sticks and kitchen utensils, snatched up on the spur of the moment, in his face, the bewildered animal meanwhile glaring wildly on his tormentors, and almost strangling himself in his efforts to break from their hands. A little nearer the gate all the women servants of the house, with Ellen and Connor among them, were ranged in various attitudes round a bare-footed boy, who had already been lifted from the ground, and was leaning a shock head against Ellen's shoulder. It was all very well, of course, to be compassionate, thought Pelham. The girls at Pelham Court would be as ready as Ellen herself to help anyone who had been hurt, but they would not have gone down on their knees in a puddle of wet in the stable-yard, and had tears streaming down their cheeks, while all the grooms and half the people of the village looked on. Had nobody any common sense? Was the chief business of life here to make ridiculous scenes? Pelham strode on furiously towards the men.

"Let that dog loose instantly!" he shouted. "You're driving him mad by ill-treating him in that shameful way."

"Ill-trating the dog, is it we are, sir? Shure we all thought it was the dog that had been ill-trating the boy," exclaimed James Morris, one of the men who held on to the collar, looking up at Pelham as he spoke with an air of innocent surprise.

"Mad's the word, and mad he is," cried the second holder. "Shure it's at the risk of our lives we're houlding him for Mr. Pelham to see how out-and-out mad and

savage the cratur's turned all on a suddint, as we all knew he would, alang of being chained up here and angered wid the boys coming and going."

"Hould on a minute longer, boys!" shouted the man from the tail. "Glory be to the Saints, we have him safe, Mr. Pelham dear, and he shan't touch ye till ye tell us what to do wid him. Will we knock him on the head wid a shillalagh, yer honour, or bring the loaded pistol from the masher's room, and make an end of him that way?"

Without deigning another word, Pelham pushed a path through the crowd till he reached his favourite, who, at sight of him, shook off the relaxing hold of his captors, and, springing towards his master, placed two huge paws on his shoulders, and joyfully licked his face.

"You see he is as safe and gentle as a lamb if you only knew how to manage him properly," Pelham said, looking round haughtily on the scattered servants, who had fled far and wide as soon as they saw that the dog was loose.

"And those who don't know how to manage him'll deserve the tratement they get, and will have to put up wid it. Shure, boys, we are warned, and can't complain," observed James Morris, the young groom, who alone had kept his place by the kennel.

Still with a restraining hand on the dog's head, Pelham bent over towards the boy, who, supported by Ellen's and Connor's arms, was now sitting up and staring confusedly round him.

"I hope he is not much hurt," he said, addressing Ellen; "I shall be very sorry for it if he is—really hurt. You may give him anything he likes from me to make up for it—money, or anything."

Two wild blue eyes, gazing out from the roughest elf locks and the palest cheeks Pelham had ever seen in his life, were lifted to his face as he spoke, and took a long considering look into it—one of those looks from which a life-long love or hate may take its birth.

"Thank yer honour; but there's nothing yer honour could give me that I would like," was the deliberate sentence that came at the end of the look, from two white lips trembling with pain.

Pelham turned hastily away, shocked and hurt.

It was not his fault if the lad was injured; and he had spoken to him kindly. What could be the meaning of the indignant flash that came from Connor's and Ellen's eyes, as they almost pushed him out of their patient's neighbourhood.

"We are going to try to carry you into the house now, Murdock, Miss Ellen and I," Connor said.

"And the swans' eggs, Mr. Connor dear! By good luck I put thim here inside the breast of me coteen, and they're safe. As soon as I heered ye wanted thim, what could I do but come to ye wid thim?"

"And this is what you get by coming, my poor Murdock!" cried Connor, the quick tears swelling in his eyes as he spoke.

A flush of colour came into the fainting boy's face at the sight, and he made an eager effort to raise himself.

"Maybe I'm not hurt, after all, Mr. Connor dear, barring me leg: that's a trifle oneasy. I'll walk to the house wid the best of them."

But the effort to drag his leg from the ground only resulted in a deeper groan of pain than he had yet suffered to escape him, and a recurrence of the faintness, during which he was lifted carefully up from the ground in Connor's and Ellen's arms and carried to the kitchen.

"Could not some of these women help to carry the boy better than Ellen?" remonstrated Pelham, who could not help an involuntary movement of disgust as he saw an arm, that a mass of dirty rags did not cover, passed round Ellen's white neck.

"Begging yer honour's pardon," volunteered the beggar Kitty, who was standing near. "There is not one of us—not the strongest—that could do it anything nigh as well. It's not the strength; it's the way, as we've all seen betwixt you and the great brute that's whispering in yer ear this minute. Ladies there are, and Miss Eileen's one of them, glory be to the blessed Virgin for that same, that have ways wid the sickness, and pain, and sorrow, to keep it down under their hand as you keep the dog there. Long may they reign over us in the land!"

There were many murmured "True for ye, Kitty," as the lookers-on flocked after the sick boy and his bearers into the kitchen, leaving Pelham alone in the court-yard

to secure Lictor's broken chain, and coax him to subside quietly into his kennel.

He was bitterly vexed and annoyed at what had happened, and in the midst of his real concern for the principal sufferer his heart swelled high with indignation at the ill-will that had been shown to himself. Those people had looked at him as if he were a sort of Cain, and he could not see that he was in any way responsible for the accident, or had done or said anything blameworthy. He felt it very hard to be so capriciously and unjustly judged; yet before he had made the link of the broken chain secure, he had taken what appeared to him a magnanimous resolve. The prejudices of these people should not prevent him from doing what he considered his duty in this matter; neither more nor less. All proper precautions against future accidents he would enforce himself, but he would not give up the only living thing about the place that seemed capable of trusting him (Lictor was vehemently caressing the hands that were restraining his liberty at the moment), and he would insist on making compensation to the injured boy. There was no sense in the lad's saying that he would not accept any present from him. It was clearly his duty to offer him a present, since he was hurt, and the beggar-boy must be forced to accept it.

The consciousness of having made up his mind how to act supported him during the trying hours of the rest of the day, while the whole household continued in a state of excitement, and persisted in keeping up an aggravating show of antagonism against him.

At luncheon the story of the accident had to be told in full to his father, Sir Charles Pelham, and Mr. O'Roone, who, unluckily for himself, had ridden over to Castle Daly with papers to sign, and had, to his extreme discomfiture, been drawn into the conference in the study.

The gentlemen were all pre-occupied, and paid less attention to the narrative than it would have received at another time, but the few comments that did pass were distasteful to Pelham.

"Of course you won't care to keep the hound here after this, Pelham?" his father said. "He is a fine animal, and all right as far as I can judge, but there seems to be a

notion among the servants that he has gone or is going mad, and they will lead him a dreadful life. Better send him back to Pelham Court, before he gets injured."

"May I not keep him here if I like, father?" cried Pelham; "he is not any more mad than I am; and I should not like to be forced to send him away for those fools saying so."

"Quite right too, Pelham," put in his Uncle; "Lictor is a faithful servant, and does his work of guarding the yard only too well; that's why your idle rascals of servants want to get rid of him, Daly. I would not give in to them if I were you, or you'll never be master of your house again."

"Sir Charles Pelham might find if he lived here that to support unpopular servants, especially if they are strangers in the country, is a task that the most popular masters find beyond their power, and that costs them their lives sometimes," observed Mr. O'Roone, carelessly.

"Yet under some circumstances it may prove a task that has to be undertaken, even if it be at the risk of life," said Mr. Daly, looking across the table at his agent, with a little sparkle of displeasure in his lazy eyes. "If you've done eating, O'Roone, we will go back to the study; I shall not rest now till I have carried this business through. As for Lictor, Pelham, do as you please; you are right not to desert a calumniated friend, only you must prepare for some trouble. If you keep him here you will have to look after him closely."

When his father left the room, his mother took up the subject.

"Pelham, dear, you know I can't bear you to be obliged to give up anything you like, but——"

"It will be very hard if I am obliged to give up my dog," interrupted Pelham; "Connor has no end of pet animals, and the servants are ready enough to wait upon them. Why should they all take against the only creature I care for?"

"Why, indeed?" echoed Mrs. Daly, sadly; "but, Pelham, I've had the same thing to bear; I know what it is to live among people who make a point of disliking every person or thing I favour. I've learned to do without wishes and favourites now."

"Of course, if you desire it, mother, to please you, I will send Lictor away; but all I can say is that if he goes I'd a great deal rather not stay behind. I shall wish the vacation over, and never want to come back here again, that is all."

"Then keep him, pray keep him," cried Mrs. Daly, with more warmth than usual in her manner, as she stooped to kiss her eldest son's forehead; "I should be sorry indeed to think we could not make your home happy to you for one vacation."

Here was another pain for her to take back to her room and her paces up and down, the thought that her favourite son cared more for his dog's company than he did for hers, and could talk indifferently of never seeing her again if his will were crossed in a trifle. Certainly, she said to herself, she had not the enviable art of making people happy about her, or of being much to them. An odd-looking old maid like Anne O'Flaherty could make herself of consequence to those over whom she had no claim—men who had never loved her; children she had neither borne nor nursed—but it was different with her.

Pelham found his way back to the school-room, when his mother left him, and spent the long afternoon in alternately writing a sentence in his letter and sitting with his feet on the fender, pulling a pen to pieces, and trying to make up his mind whether or not he should add a postscript to tell his friend that he might be on the look-out for Lictor's return to his old quarters. The decision hung long in the balance, while he sat listening listlessly to the little sounds that were distinctly heard in the unusual silence into which the household had subsided. The arrival and departure of the doctor who had come to set poor Murdock's broken limb; Ellen's and Connor's cautious steps passing and re-passing the corridor that led to the room where he lay; and now and again, when a door was opened in the lower story, the sound of voices in eager, if not angry, conversation in the study below. A decision was being slowly come at there too, on which this seemingly trifling decision of Pelham's was to weigh in a manner he little expected, and which had that in it that altered and coloured the lives of everyone in the house.

Just as Pelham had all but made up his mind to add the

postscript, the school-room door opened, and Ellen stole in with a deprecating, entreating look on her face that at once put all Pelham's obstinate instincts on guard.

He laid down his pen and began to fold his letter. "Well, what do you want?" he began at last, finding that she stood still before him, looking at him in a fashion that made him fear his ill-humour might slip away under the influence of her appealing eyes.

"Connor sent me. He wants to know what you have settled to do about Lictor."

"Settled nothing but to go and see him fed, which I shall do as soon as I have folded my letter."

"He cannot possibly stay here after what happened this morning."

"Who says so?"

"Connor and I. Connor has promised Murdock and the other boys that Lictor shall be sent away, and he must keep his word."

"He seems to fancy himself master here, but as I happen to be two years older than he, it's not very likely I should take orders from him. Let him look after his own ragged regiment. I shall keep my dog; and you may just tell Connor that I'll never forgive anyone who meddles with him—never. Now, don't open your eyes and stand staring at me in that idiotic way. Let me pass; I tell you I want to post my letter." It cost Pelham a good deal to work himself up into such anger as this. He felt he was sacrificing his dignity, but it was a relief to come to a decision of some sort, and to have declared war if war was to be.

Ellen left the room with reluctant steps, and was beckoned by Connor, who was holding a door ajar at the end of the long corridor.

"Well, what does he say? Murdock has fallen asleep at last, so you may speak out."

"He is very angry, and says he will never forgive anyone who interferes, never; and he looks as if he meant it."

"Hum—does he?" said Connor, abruptly drawing in his head and shutting the door in Ellen's face.

She could not bear to go back into the deserted school-room, nor down stairs with the chance of again encountering Pelham. There was nothing for it but to ensconce herself

in the low seat of the passage window, and drearily watch the rain lashing the window-panes. It seemed a cruel stroke of destiny that this day, of all days, should be hopelessly wet; if only the clouds would have lightened a little, and she could have ridden off post-haste to "Good People's Hollow," and brought back Anne O'Flaherty, there might have been some chance of an amendment in circumstances and people's tempers; as it was, it was a dreary day—Ellen Daly's first experience of irremediably dreary days.

She saw nothing more of Connor till late, when he rapped at her door as she was putting the finishing touches to her toilet before going down into the drawing-room after dinner.

"Come in. I am only sewing fresh pink bows on my skirt. Mamma looked so vexed last night when Uncle Charles noticed the ravelled state of my old ribbons; but, oh, Connor dear, what is the matter? you look dreadful. Come in and sit down. What terrible thing has happened?"

"Nothing has happened, that's it—that's what's the matter," said Connor, after a minute's silence, drawing away the trembling hands with which he had covered his face as he sank into a chair. "Ellen, I can't think how people do things. That Matthew Lynch, when he strung up his son from the window in Galway, with all the people looking on below; and Connor of the double-sword, when he struck off the spy's head as he sat at table—how did they make their hands move when the moment came? mine would not. I have often pictured myself doing such things; but when I was there—when I saw it—when it lifted its eyes to my face and whined—I could not—my hands would not. Never again shall I be able to fancy myself doing a thing. How horrid it is!"

"Oh, Connor dear, I hope you never will! Not anything dreadful like that! Pelham would never have forgiven you. How could you ever think of doing such a wicked thing?"

"He threatened me, and that was what drove me to try. I was in the yard while he was feeding Lictor, and it put me past all patience to see how he fondled the ugly brute and let it lick his face. I thought I would put an end to that, and show him he could not lord it over us all here

yet; so, when he and everyone else had gone in to dinner, I took one of the pistols from my father's case, those he keeps loaded, and went out again; there was no one in the yard but James Morris. It was nearly dark. Lictor was lying still after his feed. I went quite close up to him, and held the pistol to his head, and then I found out that about myself I told you of."

"Connor, I am so glad; it was a wicked thing you wanted to do, and Someone [Ellen bowed her head] hindered you. I am glad."

"I believe I am glad too. Glad that I did not do it—not that I could not—that part disgusts me. I would not have Pelham know for the world; he would despise me more than ever. You may depend upon it, when he makes up his mind to do a thing, he does it."

"But he never thinks of such outrageous things to do."

"However, you are not to suppose that I have given in to him about Lictor yet."

"Oh, Connor!"

"Don't cry out! I'm not going to hurt the brute, or let anyone else hurt him; but I shall keep my word about his not staying here. I came up to tell you, because you are sure to be the first person questioned, and you had better be on your guard as to what you say. James Morris is waiting for me now in the yard, and we have concocted a capital plan together. Lictor is always unchained at ten o'clock, and let roam about the grounds till morning—at least Pelham thinks so—but already the boys are too many for him. To-night James will manage as he has done before to muzzle Lictor tight and lead him out of the yard. There'll be a car waiting at the corner of the road to take Murdock's grandmother, who has come to see him, back to her cabin, if anybody asks what it is there for; but the old lady'll stay quietly enough in the house till morning; it's the dog, and James, and me, that the car will carry away. I shall take Lictor to a place among the hills that I know of, where there are boys who to please me would hide bigger things than a dog, so that it would take sharp eyes to find it. There he shall stay, till Pelham gives in, owns we're too many for him, and consents to send his pet back to England."

"Con, I don't like it. Pelham does love his dog, and he'll be so bitterly angry."

"How many more boys would you like to see kilt before somebody pistols the animal, for that'll be the end of him if he stays here?"

"Oh, dear, there is the dining-room door opening—I must go down in a minute. Shall you come back before night?"

"No, I'm going too far away for that; and, Ellen, do you know I've an idea of not coming back at all for a day or so, till the storm's blown over. It would be capital fun being lost. The boys up there, where I'm going, trust me enough to hide me for as long as I choose to keep out of the way. Whatever I see, they know I shall never tell, and I've a fancy for seeing."

"Connor, you dreadful boy, you must not: mamma would go out of her mind. Imagine all Uncle Charles would say. Even papa would be angry. For my sake give up that part of the scheme at least. Is it not to Hill Dennis's place you are going? Red-haired Dennis, who brought Pelham back from the bog when he was a boy?"

"You had better not know, and then when the row begins, you can't be bullied into telling."

"No, I won't know, but I can't help guessing. You said up among the hills. You will be near enough to Good People's Hollow, to go there the first thing in the morning, before they inquire for you here. Promise me to go there, Connor, or else I won't keep the secret. Then, at breakfast to-morrow morning, I can say you have gone over to see Cousin Anne. It will keep mamma from being anxious, and if Cousin Anne gets to know all this trouble, she will come over and put us all to rights."

"It's not a bad idea. I believe the hiding will be most complete that way. There will be nothing odd in my having gone over to the Lodge before breakfast; no one will suspect me of taking Lictor there. He will seem to have been spirited away, and no one will ever get a word of the truth out of James Morris. I should like to see Pelham's face when he comes up to the empty kennel to-morrow, and James begins to blarney him."

"I shall ~~not~~ like to see it. You know, Con, I am always on ~~your~~ side whatever you do; but I shall not be

able to help being sorry for Pelham. It's a harder thing for him to be made angry than it is for you or me. He can't forgive as we can, because it has been so much greater pain. I know that about him, though he says so little."

"Well, but you'll keep the secret whatever comes? Beyond all, don't let out a hint of James Morris or Red-haired Dennis being in it. What would they say through the country if Miss Eileen turned informer? I'm going to bed now—you understand—tired out with nursing Murdock Malachy all the afternoon. As you open the drawing-room door, I shall be shutting myself into my bedroom with a good loud clap."

"No don't, Connor dear; that's just a useless bit of the scheming I wish you were not so fond of. No one will ask for you, for I think the elders are all busy about something to-day, and have no thoughts to spare for us. I shall keep close to the piano all the evening, and play all the vulgarest jigs and dances I know, to please Mr. O'Roone, and set Uncle Charles off talking to papa and mamma about his daughters' music-lessons, and the grand German and Italian music they perform. I know how quiet that keeps everybody."

CHAPTER V.

"A face tender and wise.
God, what power to bless in the pure eyes!
With a look straight out
On us weak, strewn all about;
A desire to bear, and to bear, and to bear;
A fire kept steady, and strong, and clear;
A prayer to be led near
Unto distress most dire."

Little Sealskin, and other Poems.

THE world, or at least the secluded nook of it in which Happy-go-Lucky Lodge nestled, seemed to have been plunged bodily under water for a day, and lifted up again to dry in the sun, so pure and vividly green, and sparkling with diamond drops, were every blade of grass and clump of fern and flowery gorse bush within its hill-enclosed circle, when Connor next morning reached the turn in the

steep road at which the little valley first burst upon his view. It was early, but the range of hills towards the east was broken by a cleft, through which the morning sunshine streamed in solid-looking rays, that made the green fields and tiny garden plots round the cabins glow like emeralds, and brought out in strong contrast the soft lilac shadows on the opposite hills, and the purple gloom of the mountains in the distance. Connor was too full of his own affairs to have much thought to bestow on the beauty of the morning, yet he could not help pausing for a minute before he began the rugged descent into the Hollow to glance around him. It looked like a nook dropped among the hills and forgotten. Yet, in spite of its seclusion, an air of brisk life and activity pervaded the place. Already Connor could catch the sound of voices, and descry strings of figures verging from different quarters towards a group of buildings that occupied the centre of the valley.

The principal of these, a tall white house, was situated on a jutting-out mass of rock, that had been turned into an island by the waters of a little mountain stream that, after running impetuously down the hills on the western side, suddenly, on reaching the middle of the valley, spread itself out into a shallow pool, and had once lost itself altogether in swamps and bog-land, but was now by judicious violence obliged to gather its waters together a few yards below the stone house, and keep a meandering course through reclaimed plots of potato grounds and meadow land till it found a vent among the eastern hills. The rocky prominence rose some height above the level of the water, and just afforded space for the tall white house, each corner of which was rounded off into a projecting turret. The front of the house was connected with the mainland by a wide-arched bridge, and facing each of the four turrets stretched four long, narrow, red brick buildings, which, seen from the height on which Connor stood, seemed to hang down like ropes from the airy white building on the island, and fasten it solidly to its bearings on the firm earth, as the suspending threads of a spider's web hold it safely swaying in the air.

It was towards these buildings that the children from the cottages and hillsides were wending their way, and as

Connor approached the house he heard their voices rising through the open windows from one quarter, in the loud buzz of repeated lessons ; from the other in songs mingled with the click of tools and the hum of wheels that told of some sort of manufactory being carried on within. He knew the ways of the Happy-go-Lucky establishment too well to have any curiosity to look in at the work-rooms. The gates of the farm-yard and flower-garden, which had to be passed through before reaching the head of the bridge, were wide open, free to anyone to pass through, and the first person Connor encountered was a wooden-faced old man, seated on a horse-block, with his elbows on his knees, staring disconsolately at the *débris* of a carriage which lay in a heap in the middle of the yard, and every now and then shaking his head vehemently and making a threatening gesture towards it with his fist. Connor's "Good morning, Peter Lynch. Is it your fine three-wheeler you have got in ruins there?" elicited only a growl such as might have been drawn from a sullen bear by vehement poking, and as his further question as to whether Miss O'Flaherty was at home received only for answer a gesture of the man's thumb towards one of the turrets, he walked on without any further attempts at conversation.

The front door, though it faced the bridge with a flight of white stone steps and a bright knocker, was the last place by which anyone thought of entering the Lodge. Con passed it as a matter of course, and made the circuit of the building, looking into three of the turret bay-windows as he passed till he came to the fourth, where, finding what he was in search of, he calmly crossed his arms on the low sill, put his head in at the window, and waited till the occupant of the room should chance to look his way.

Breakfast was laid out on a small table, close to a cosy-looking turf fire, before which two little white-capped maidens were busy making toast and boiling eggs, with a good deal of the bustle and importance of juvenile cooks. They were the first to spy Connor at the window, but he made a hasty sign to them to be silent, and the little giggles into which they exploded at the sight were evidently too ordinary accompaniments of their work to

attract the attention of a lady who lay half-reclined on a sofa in the window recess, only separated from the open window and from Connor's head by a narrow table, which held her books and work. She had evidently been trying to do two or three things at a time. The table was covered with a quantity of feathers of various colours, which she had been sorting into heaps. She held a little bunch suspended in one hand, but the other was busily turning over the leaves of a large book that lay in her lap, and her eyes were so intently devouring its pages that neither Connor's proximity, nor the twitches at her hair of a tame raven that had perched itself on her shoulder expectant of its breakfast, had power to draw them away. Connor looked straight down into her face, but not a muscle of it changed. It was a pleasant face to look down into: the hair at which the raven was pulling was partly hidden under a falling black lace handkerchief, knotted under the chin; the bright colouring of youth had long since faded out of it, but its pale yellow tints, deadened with streaks of grey, still had a softening and brightening effect on the rather strongly-marked features and high wide brows round which it was bound. The cheeks, though lined and worn, had not lost their original delicate pink and white; and even the absorbed attention to which the face was composed, did not quench an expression of energy and alertness that was almost youthful.

Connor's patience was exhausted when the third leaf was turned; the toast and eggs were growing cold on the table, and he was hungry. He leaned a little further into the room, and blew a cloud of feathers into the wrapt reader's face. She looked up suddenly, but without start or exclamation—rather with an air as if she had been so far away it took a second or two to get back again; and Connor, propping his elbows on the window-sill again, and dropping his face between his hands, had the first word.

"So, Cousin Anne, you and Peter Lynch have come to grief with the three-wheeler. I thought, between you, you had built a carriage that could not be overturned. How was it?"

Full consciousness came back with a flash into the blue eyes in which years had not extinguished the mirth.

"It was not our fault; certainly not Peter Lynch's."

By all the rules of mechanism that ever were ruled the thing could not have overturned. I stick to that and by Peter, whatever anyone says."

"In spite of broken limbs got in the overthrow?"

"No; only a sprained ankle. I tell Peter, to comfort him, that it might just as well have happened any other way—in crossing the bridge, or coming down stairs. Nothing's easier."

"Ah, but it was done in an overthrow of the three-wheeler. The great prime minister driving you himself, eh?"

"Well, yes, Peter was driving."

"I only hope it has overturned his conceit a little. I see it has brought him to his dumb condition, for he would not speak a word to me as I passed through the yard. To the condition of owning that he and you could make a mistake I suppose nothing will ever bring him."

"And we have not made a mistake; the three-wheeler is an admirable invention, and could not have been overturned if by ill-luck it had not been built the least taste of an inch higher in the back than I intended. As soon as I am well, and Peter has recovered his spirits, we shall set to work to build another. You heard of the accident yesterday at Castle Daly, I suppose, and your father good-naturedly sent you off to triumph over me?"

"Well, no, not exactly; it was Ellen that told me to come here."

"Why don't you jump over the sill, then, and sit down to breakfast?"

"I'm waiting for you to tell me I'm welcome."

"Of course you're welcome. Would you like me to say 'as flowers in May'—or what form of flattery will satisfy you?"

"Say 'under all circumstances.' If I were a thief running away from justice, for example, should I be kindly welcome then?"

"What ridiculous humour is the boy in this morning?"

"It would be so pleasant to know I could never come amiss to you. And there are a great many different ways of thieving. One might have to steal something at some time in one's life, on principle, for the glory of God and the Church, as Henry II stole Ireland, and as all the

ferce O'Flahertys of old times fleeced the poor-spirited Lynches of Galway, leaving you one for your bond slave, or bond master. Which is it now?"

"If it is only nonsense about O'Flahertys and Lynches you are talking, you had better come in and eat your breakfast before the eggs are cold. You must have left home in the middle of the night. How come you here so early?"

"There was a car coming along with one of the boys, and he brought me to the turn of the road. But I *am* hungry. I say, Anne, if you have one of your famous fish pies in the larder, it would not be amiss to send for it. It's best to be candid on such points, you know; and, as I said before, I just am hungry."

Anne laughed, and ordered the pie. By the time half of it was despatched, Connor's tongue was at leisure for conversation again.

"Well, if there's a capital dish anywhere it's a 'Happy-go-Lucky' fish pie. No one like you for turning out a good thing to eat, Cousin Anne."

"If there's a boy anywhere great at the blarney, it's Connor Daly."

"But how about the supply of fish? Have you completed your invention yet for making the fish catch themselves on rods stuck through the walls of the house, and ring little bells at the same time to warn you to come and pull them in, as the fish of the monks of Cong used to do?"

"If we have not rivalled the monks of Cong yet, we have no reason, as you see, to complain of a failure of provisions—and, by the way, you have come on a lucky day. The pond on the east of the house wants cleaning. They are going to let off the water to-day, and there will be a grand take of fish. As I can't look after it myself——"

"Thanks to Peter Lynch."

"And as poor Peter is a little out of spirits——"

"In a black temper."

"Out of spirits, you may as well go out and see the spoil divided. I have decided to give the fish to the women of the valley who can cook it properly. The bad cooks are to get nothing."

"I quite understand; such wretched creatures as refuse

to follow 'Happy-go-Lucky' receipts deserve to starve. But, I say, Anne, who judges the cookery? Do you make them all bring little bits of their dinners for you to taste, that you may judge of their skill and obedience?"

"No, you saucy boy, I take the husbands' opinion about the cooking, and so you see if any of them have been mean-spirited enough to defame their wives, they'll suffer for it. Now, you may as well go off to the pond, for I have plenty to do this morning."

Cousin Anne betook herself again to her book and her feathers, but these only served as interludes to the real business of the day which thronged round her as the morning wore on. The Lodge stood conspicuous in the middle of the valley, and seemed to lie so directly in the way of all comers and goers, that no man or woman in the district thought of setting out on or returning from any business a little more important than ordinary, without turning in at the bridge-head, to tap at the window and consult the Lady, or report progress, on his or her proceedings. Now, it was a little group of children who came to show the baskets full of cranberries they had gathered since morning on the hills, and to receive the slice of white bread and butter which Miss O'Flaherty's little hand-maidens were instructed to serve out to the possessor of the best-filled basket. Now, it was a man with an important face, carrying something mysteriously wrapped up in a red neckerchief, which something, when its bearer had filled up the window opening by thrusting his person through it, and bringing his face close enough to Miss O'Flaherty's to whisper in her ear, was discovered to be the sum of money received yesterday in Ballyowen market for a litter of pigs, and brought to the Lady, to be kept safe out of the way of an extravagant wife and grasping son, till its proper owner had studied what he wished to do with it.

A little later, it was a woman with wild black hair streaming over her shoulders and cloak awry, sobbing as she ran, who had come hot from a quarrel with her husband, and who would have made the whole place ring with her outcries, if Anne had not contrived to take possession of the hands she was wringing passionately, and draw her down into such a position within the

window-seat that she could look straight into her eyes; after which the conference went on quietly, between eagerly-spoken complaints that changed by degrees into sobbing murmurs on one side, and short, soothing sentences extending into remonstrances and exhortations on the other.

"Eh, but it's your ladyship that leads the happy life intirely," said the poor woman, recovering herself sufficiently at last to draw the tear-drenched corner of her cloak from her eyes, and glance admiringly round the sunshiny room,—“wid nothing to do but plase yerself night and day, and never knowing what it is to have a man to contend wid. It's aisy talking for the like of you.”

“I dare say you are right,” said Anne O’Flaherty, smiling; “I don’t suppose I do know as much about the real sorrows of life as do most of you women who come to me for advice; but you know, Biddy, it’s standers-by that see furthest into the game; and any way it’s not my own words I give you. ’Twas the wisest man ever lived wrote that little word, about the soft answer I want you to take home with you; and, for the rest, you’re not the faint-hearted woman to be willing to give up your man for the first hard words that have passed between you. Go home and cook the fine fish I shall send you, for his supper, in a way that’ll make him just ashamed of himself.”

As interludes to the business of the elder people, Anne’s attention was every now and then claimed by the occupants of the four buildings that flanked the house where the children of the valley were assembled, learning their lessons and practising one or other of the little arts that Anne had introduced among her people. In the midst of all came running messengers, bare-footed gossoons with elf-locks flying to report the progress of the operations that Connor and his party were carrying on at the pond below, and to carry back her instructions and congratulations on the success of their sport.

Connor was quite in his element, and did not allow himself to be troubled by any uneasy thoughts about the effect his disappearance might have produced at home. Ellen knew all about it, and might be trusted in any emergency that arose to look after his interests at all events. The habit of relying upon Ellen to bear the first

brunt of the blame due to his escapades was of such old standing that the selfishness of the proceeding scarcely struck him. If he had been present and seen the trouble going on, he would have been forward enough to take his share, but out of sight of it he could no more help throwing himself with zest into any amusement that came in his way than he could help breathing.

Anne did not trouble him with embarrassing questions; it was not her way. People who came to her with anything on their minds, generally took her into their confidence before they had been many hours in her company; and she could always wait.

When the house was still in the evening, Connor took possession of a low seat by Anne's sofa, and amused himself by turning out a table-drawer which contained plans, drawings, and half-finished models of all the mechanical contrivances that had haunted Anne's inventive brain since the last time he had weeded out her private repository; and when he had done criticizing and she defending these, he made her laugh by giving a representation of Sir Charles Pelham opening out his views on Ireland to his father and Mr. O'Roone. Only once in the course of the evening, when Anne, tired out with laughing and talking, lay back on her sofa to rest for a few minutes, was he in danger of telling his secret.

"Do you remember, Anne," he began, suddenly, after a little interval of silence, "one day last summer, when we drove down to the shore and brought back a quantity of shells you wanted for something you were making? Some of the shells turned out to have hermit crabs in them. I put them into a jar of salt water to keep them alive, and in the morning we found that they had fought and torn each other out of their shells. You cried about it. Yes, you did, Anne—I saw you. You said it was cruel to shut fierce creatures up in a small space, where there was nothing for them to do but tear each other to pieces."

"Well, what then?"

"Oh, I was only thinking that I know people who are a good deal like those hermit crabs. Shut them up together even for a rainy day, and they fight—not to death exactly; but they tear each other out of their shells—the worst part of each other, you know; the vexation and

dislike and contempt, that used to be so covered up, you did not know it was there. Such people had better get out of each other's way anyhow."

"I don't know about *anyhow*," said Anne, reflectively.

"Then just look here," Connor began,—but at that moment a bell in some down-stairs region rang, and a troop of maidens flocked in for evening prayers. There was no opportunity for the conversation to be renewed that night, and as Connor went up to bed he could not help congratulating himself that his impulse towards confession had been arrested. Anne would not have given him any peace till he had restored Lictor to Pelham, if once she had heard the particulars of the quarrel. And Connor thought he might as well let himself have as long a respite as possible before disagreeable concessions had to be made.

It was not till the third morning, just as he and Anne and Peter Lynch in recovered spirits, were engaged in an eager discussion over the best method of repairing the three-wheeled car, that he espied his father approaching the house on horseback.

"I think I shall go down to the old stone quarry, and watch the men blasting; they are at work there this morning," he said. "Here's my father coming to pay you a visit. He always likes to have you to himself, and you'll know where to find me when I'm wanted."

"Oh, Connor, then you have been doing something you are ashamed of. I did think you would have told me honestly, and not let me shelter you on false pretences," said Anne reproachfully.

"I'll come all right when I'm wanted; but you may just as well hear what he has got to say first; and, Anne, while you are listening, remember what I said to you about those precious hermit crabs, and you'll acknowledge that I was in the right in what I did."

"So you always are by your own account, Connor."

By this time Mr. Daly was near enough to the house for Anne to notice the attitude in which he sat his horse, and the general air of his figure.

"You had better shut the window, Peter," she said, "and wheel my sofa out of the recess, that the people may understand I am not to be interrupted. I shall not be able to think any more about the car to-day."

She felt sure that some deeper trouble was weighing **on** her cousin's mind than could be caused by any boyish misconduct of Connor's.

CHAPTER VI.

"Hapless nation—hapless land,
Heap of uncementing sand :
Crumbled by a foreign weight,
And by worse, domestic hate.

God of mercy, God of peace,
Make the mad confusion cease ;
O'er the mental chaos move,
Through it speak the light of Love."

ANNE's first glance at Mr. Daly's face when he entered her room confirmed her fear that he had come to announce a serious mishap.

"Is anybody ill at Castle Daly? Have you been really made anxious by Connor's disappearance?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh, no; Ellen knew he was here, and told her mother so. He has behaved ill, and I am very angry with him. I have some bad news for him too, that will punish him more than my displeasure; but all that will keep. I want some talk with you first, if it is possible to get a quarter of an hour's conversation here without half the inhabitants of the Hollow for audience."

"I have secured that we shall not be interrupted."

"And you can actually spare me the time?"

"I think you need not ask that."

But with all these preliminaries the conversation was long in beginning.

Mr. Daly wandered restlessly about the room for a considerable time, pausing before the numerous cabinets and little tables to take up and seem to examine carefully the various ornaments, all of home manufacture, that were scattered about.

"Cousin Anne," he began abruptly, at last, "you were a wise woman to refuse to marry me when I asked you about this time twenty years ago."

"Cousin Dermot," she answered, "you were a foolish boy

on sh twenty years ago, when you asked a woman older than yourself, whom you did not love, to marry you."

"What makes you say I did not love you? I thought I did; and I am sure I swore it often enough."

"But I knew you did not, and you know it now; so if you will go back to look at old times, take care to see them in their true light, not more promising than they were."

"I should have loved you if you had listened to me. I wonder, if you could have foreseen the mess I have made of my life, whether you would have taken me out of compassion."

"No, I should not; I had too much respect for you and for myself, Dermot, to marry you for the sake of saving you the trouble of managing your own life, and it would not have answered if I had."

"If *you* had ever come to despise me, Anne, it would have been for my real sins, not for little oddities of manner and inconsiderate impulses that are too much bound up in the heart of me ever to be put off. Just blame is wholesome; it is the dull, silent, dead weight of opposition to one's whole nature that crushes all the life out and leaves one a dead, stupid log, to be drifted about by the tide of events."

"May I ask one question? Are you talking of a remediable trouble? If not, is there any use in looking at it?"

"Is there any use in crying out when one is in great pain? May not one allow one's self at rare intervals the luxury of grumbling? You have never had a great pain in your life, Anne."

"So everyone tells me," said Anne, smiling.

"And I claim a right to inflict grumbling on you, seeing that you refused to give me the chance of having nothing to grumble about. There was another expectation I had of you, Anne, that you failed me in."

"I! how did I fail you?"

"When I brought my young wife home here to struggle with difficulties she was hardly fit to meet, I trusted to you to make her path smooth for her. I thought you would instil your magic of governing into her, and teach her to win the people and tolerate their ways, a thing she has never yet been able to bring herself to do. I even fancied that, if misunderstandings should arise between us (such different natures as we are), I might trust to your old

knowledge of me to interpret me to her, and gloss over my faults with the glamour of your sisterly indulgence. I pictured you two living together as sisters."

"It was an extremely masculine fancy, Dermot; and if you had really wished to carry it out, you should not have let her see me for the first time when I was dressed in a red cloak of native manufacture, and standing up to my ankles in a bog with half the population of the Hollow vociferating round me. She has never recovered the shock of that introduction."

"I wanted her to see how you brought order out of disorder, and managed the unmanageable. She has the same ends in view as you have, and as she and I fail, and you succeed, surely she might let us learn of you."

"No, no, my ends are a long way from hers, and she would not be satisfied to come at them by my means. We are all children together in the Hollow, you see, Dermot. Some wise man has said that an unmarried woman, however old she may be, always remains something of a child; and in my case it answers very well. I can be content to coax and scold and rule despotically my fellow-children, without expecting too much from them or being discouraged by their outbreaks and vagaries. It is far harder for her, who has been used to grown-up men and women for servants and dependants."

"That sounds like saying that Irish men and women are nothing better than children. What do you call me?"

"Hardly as grown-up as some people. But, indeed, I only meant our uneducated, wild, West country people here."

"I am very much obliged to you for giving me such a philosophical reason for coming to the conclusion that our household will never work well together. You can't blame me now for what I have come to tell you. Anne, I have given it all up. I made up my mind last night and told my wife, so there is no going back now. I am going to turn absentee. Being convicted of incapacity to manage my own affairs by my brother-in-law, I have consented to put them into the hands of an agent of his choosing, who is to live at Castle Daly and keep a tight hand over the tenants, while we pass our time in England or abroad—till Pelham is of age, at all events. Now why don't you exclaim—why don't you remind me that I have sworn a

hundred times that nothing should induce me to skulk out of the country and leave my people to the mercy of a stranger? Where's your indignation?"

"You said you had made up your mind, and could not go back."

"That's no reason for not abusing me. Come, say something, good or bad; nothing is so ominous as silence from you."

"What can I say but that it is a very sudden resolution?"

"Not so sudden as it seems. For years I have been gradually pushed towards it. You don't know the force of a persistent wish in the mind of a person with whom you have to pass all your days, and whom you are always trying and failing to satisfy with something else. There is an overpowering mesmerism in it. The moment comes when the temptation to end the silent struggle of wills becomes too strong to be resisted. Anything for peace, one says at last."

"But will it be peace? Won't you begin to have a persistent wish to get home again? How shall you feel?"

"Good for nothing, and miserable; but what of that? My wife tells me she has been miserable here for twenty years, and thinks it is my turn now. There should be give and take in matrimonial arrangements, should there not?"

"I cannot but think she might be made happy here, if only——"

"Let me finish your sentence—'if I had done my duty and been prudent years ago.'"

"No, if you would begin to do your duty and be prudent now. Shut up Castle Daly by all means, if you can't, as indeed I know you can't, afford to live in it; but don't leave the neighbourhood. Stay and do the needful work yourself. I can't imagine why you don't. It is not lack of energy or want of thought that has kept you idle all these years."

"Want of thought! No, indeed; it is too much thought—thought that has killed hope. You talk of my not being grown up. If looking before and after is the characteristic of a man, I am one above others, for I do nothing else. It has paralysed my hands for other doing. What is the use of throwing seed into ground that is chokeful of dragon's

teeth? There are harvests of evil to be reaped in this land before anything else can come; and seeing that as plainly as I do, I have no energy for labour. If you were to die to-morrow, Anne, Good People's Hollow would be a bog again in a few years, and the people you are trying to drag up into civilization would be as open as any of their neighbours to have their passions roused by the first schemer who appealed to the old grudges and hatreds and wild hopes that centuries of cherishing have made stronger than anything else in their natures. There would soon be not a trace of your work left."

"Granted; but what is that to me? If I can go up to Him who gave me my work, hand in hand with one brother or sister whose life I have made happier and better, it will be enough. That little bit of good will live as well as the evil you talk of, and survive it. I have nothing to do with the sowing or reaping of other people's harvests."

"You are freer than I am, Anne. We come back to the root of my difficulty again. Whatever other enemies I make, I can't bear to have foes of my own household; and within the last twenty-four hours I have come to see that, if I don't yield this point of going away, there will be a division among us that will make family union for the future an impossible thing. You must hear how far the antagonism has gone before you judge. And that brings me to the principal cause of my being here to-day. A fine piece of work of Master Connor's it is that I have to tell you of. Has not he told you himself?"

"No. I hope it is not anything wrong—nothing worse than a wild prank that has turned out ill."

"It has turned out very ill; and unluckily the prank, if he means it for one, was aimed at his brother, who is too like his mother to be a happy subject for pranks. Pelham, I must tell you, had a favourite dog sent from England, to which (as it was a good house-dog and barked at beggars) our servants took a thundering dislike. Unluckily, a few days after its arrival it threw down and seriously hurt a little boy who had come to the place on an errand for Connor. Ellen and Connor were mad to have the creature sent away on the instant, and Pelham just refused to part with it, as well he might, not choosing to be hectored by his younger brother. Small blame to him for that, you'll say. I was

too full of other things that day to give any heed to these quarrels. Ellen lays the blame on Pelham's contemptuous manner ; but, anyhow, Connor's spirit was roused, and he was resolved to have his way by fair means or foul. He connived with some of the servants to get the dog out of the yard, and carried it off himself and gave it into the keeping of two men well noted in the neighbourhood for mischief—Pat Hanalan and Red-haired Dennis, whom the gaugers have been hunting from hill to hill the last twelve months on account of a clever little still they have between them. I confess I've a sort of kindness for the rogues myself, and can't be as angry with Connor for colleaguizing with them as I ought to be, for many a laugh have he and I had together over stories of the clever shifts they've been put to. Dennis professes to feel himself safe on my ground, and considers that he has a sort of claim on my protection for having long ago found Pelham, when he had strayed away from home and was lost on a bog, and brought him safe back to the Castle. Maybe I have winked at his misdeeds long enough to make it seem hard that one of my household should turn on him—Pelham, too, who might have thought that he owed him a kindness."

"But I don't understand yet. How do you know that Connor gave up Pelham's dog to those men? And if he did, what harm has come of it?"

"I'm coming to that if you'll let me. We did not connect Connor's absence with the disappearance of the dog at first. Ellen told us he had gone to you, and I thought it was to work off a fit of the sulks. My wife and Pelham, skilfully misled by the hints of a sharp young groom who I strongly suspect was in Connor's secret, fixed their suspicions on a beggar-woman and a pedlar who had been about the place on the day of the accident. My energetic brother-in-law went off in haste to set the constables on the track of these people. It was a wrong clue, but it led to the right game. As the constables, with Pelham at their head, were scouring the country, they heard the baying of a hound, as it seemed, far down in the centre of a hill. The sound guided them; they scrambled down a steep cleft in the mountain, found the entrance to a cave that had escaped all prying eyes hitherto, and succeeded in capturing not only the plant and the

men they had been after so long, but the dead body of Pelham's unlucky favourite, who had been pistolled, of course, the instant the distillers had an inkling that their enemies were in their neighbourhood."

"So the poor dog was actually dead?"

"Yes, and the two men are in prison, committed for dog-stealing, as well as for the other offence. They never breathed Connor's name, mind you, when they were brought before me. Ellen came out with the story when she heard their fate, and you may imagine how disgusted I was. Connor is the person to blame, but all the ill-will will fall to Pelham's share, for he was the moving cause of the capture. He did not even recognize Dennis. He stood by while the constables did their work, saying very little, I am told, but showing bitter anger at the fate of his dog. The thing will never be forgotten; it's a story that will stick to those two boys for the rest of their lives here."

"Connor will be bitterly sorry."

"I hope he will have some comprehension of the harm he has done; the thing itself is no worse than a dozen other escapades that have passed unnoticed, but coming just at this moment, it has been like a spark falling on a ton of gunpowder, and produced a general explosion. He could hardly have done anything to illustrate more cleverly the evil effects of the home education I have insisted upon for him and Ellen, or to cut every ground of argument, for keeping ourselves together, from under my feet. Last night, after Ellen's confession, it all burst out—my wife's long-suppressed wish to leave the place, and disapproval of my indulgence of the younger children; my brother-in-law's pious horror at my debts and extravagance. Small blame to me, I think, if I turned tail in the combat, and owned myself beaten at last. My own sweet colleen came in for her share of the storm with her father. They blame her for keeping Connor's secret so long. If I can work myself up into a proper state of anger against him, it will be by thinking of the state of her blue eyes this morning. Well, since I can't protect her from blame, let them try their hands and make her as much of an Englishwoman as it's in her to be. When we all come back again, if we ever do, there will be less excuse than there is now for our splitting into an English

and an Irish faction, whose chief interest in life is to find fault with each other. Connor will have broken with his old associates, and will not stand out in such contrast to Pelham as to lead to perpetual remark."

"How has Pelham behaved about it all?"

"He does not say much; in fact, the lad never opens out to me. Since Connor's share in the plot against his dog came out, he is silent and looks injured. His mother looks at him, and refuses to take any notice of poor Ellen when she hovers between the two of them, and offers little services to win a look of forgiveness. It is as much as I can bear to see it in silence; yet Heaven forbid that I should put myself at the head of a faction against my wife and my eldest son. Now where is Connor? I must take him home at once. I suppose Peter Lynch can mount him?"

"He is down at the stone quarry, expecting a severe lecture, I hope. Shall I summon him?"

"No, I will walk down to meet him; and tell Peter to have the horses ready as I pass through the yard."

Cousin Anne lay back on the sofa when she was alone, longing for an opportunity to say a few soothing, peace-making words to her fiery-tempered young cousin before he left her; but her first glance into his face when he burst hastily into the room to say good-bye showed her he was in no state for even her words to have a good effect. He entered with a jaunty, defiant air, meant to carry off his pale cheeks and eyelids swollen with passionate tears.

"So, Cousin Anne," he said, "I shall be obliged to leave you and Peter to manage the mending of the three-wheeled car by yourselves. I'm very sorry, you see, but since I've been away they've contrived to make a disgusting mess of things at home, the idiots! and I'm wanted to set them to rights."

"Connor, I wish you would let me say a word to you."

"No, no, Anne; if you are to begin to improve the occasion, I vow I'll cut my throat or run away to America and never be heard of more. I'd be off this minute, that I would, only it would be a shabby trick to leave Ellen and those poor fellows in the scrape they've been brought into by interfering idiots."

"That you have brought them into, Con. Yes, it is a very shabby trick not to dare to acknowledge all the consequences of one's own acts and to bear all one can of them."

"But, Anne, you know—you know—I never meant such consequences as these."

"The letting out of water, Con; that is what the beginning of strife is, you know. Of course you can never tell where the current will carry you. I am very sorry for you. I only want to persuade you to take your share of blame bravely, and then you'll have got more than half-way to forgiving other people what you think they have been guilty of towards you and your friends."

"No, I'll stick to my friends, right or wrong, and would to the end, if it was a man they had murdered instead of a wretch of an old cur; and I'll never forgive Pelham for despising us all for being Irish. It's that and nothing else he means by all he does, you may take my word for it."

CHAPTER VII.

"Adieu to evening dances, when merry neighbours meet,
And the fiddle says to boys and girls, 'Get up and shake your feet.'
To 'Sanachus' and wise old talk of Erin's days gone by—
Who trenched the rath on such a hill, and where the bones may lie
Of saint or king, or warrior chief; with tales of fairy power,
And tender ditties sweetly sung to pass the twilight hour;
The mournful exile's song is now for me to learn."

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.

A FORTNIGHT passed before either Anne O'Flaherty or her equipage were in such a state of repair as to warrant their tempting the perils of the rugged mountain road between the Hollow and the head of the Lough; but as during that time no direct news of the Castle Daly household reached her, she made her first expedition out of her own dominions in that direction.

Peter Lynch had by that time recovered his spirits and his belief in his own and his mistress's infallibility, temporarily shaken by their ignominious overthrow in the car, and was as well prepared as usual to entertain her through half a day's journey with contemptuous comparisons

between the condition of their neighbours' property and the cultivation of the Hollow ; but as the way lay chiefly through Mr. Daly's estate, Anne was not in a mood to accept his flattery as graciously as usual. Her eyes were sufficiently open to the tokens of neglect and mismanagement that Peter eagerly pointed out, but she could not look forward with any satisfaction now to the hope of remedy. The pleasure of seeing the low thatched farm-houses, with their tumble-down barns and fences, replaced by better buildings : red "murphys" taking the place of yellow "lumpers" in the potato-grounds round the cabins ; and an improved breed of pigs ousting the long-nosed, long-eared Connaught variety of the animal from its nook in the chimney corners, would be lost to her, if the improvements she had so long advocated were to be the work of a stranger. It was almost a surprise to her when the house came into view at last, to find it looking just as usual, with all its doors and windows open to let in the sunshine, and cheerful signs of occupation in the gardens and court-yard—she had been so busy picturing it to herself as shut up and deserted.

She observed a little group of people standing out in the sunshine before the front door, when she drove up to the lodge gate. They had not assembled to welcome her, for they were all collected round another vehicle drawn up before a side door, which seemed to await some last arrangements to take its departure.

Mrs. Daly was among the group, leaning on the arm of a stout middle-aged man, who seemed to be expostulating rather loudly with the servants hanging about the car ; while Ellen, with her arms piled with pillows and shawls, stood a little in the rear. Anne left the three-wheeled car to be carried off to the back premises, and exhibited in triumph to his acquaintances there by Peter Lynch, and walked down the drive to announce herself.

Ellen espied her when she was still some yards from the house, and impetuously throwing her load down on the door-step at her mother's feet, rushed to meet her cousin, giving her a frantic squeeze in her arms before she exclaimed, breathlessly,

"Oh, Anne, Anne, are you really here ? Do you know that we are to leave Castle Daly in a week's time from

this? I think I should have gone wild if you had not come, and I had had to leave home without seeing you again."

"I think you are wild," said Anne, looking fondly down into her favourite's face, that had a new wistful expression on it that went to her heart. "If I had not come to you, of course you would have come to me. Why, I have been expecting you every day this fortnight."

"It has not been my fault," whispered Ellen; "and I don't think mamma would ever have let me go to you again. Do you know, my Uncle Pelham was dreadfully scandalized at Connor's running away to you, and at you for keeping him. In all that has happened he thinks you quite as bad as Connor. He says almost every day that from all he hears you must be a thorough Irishwoman, and you can't imagine what a dreadful creature that means to him. There he is, standing by mamma."

"A fine, goodnatured-looking gentleman," said Anne. "I think he will bear the sight of me, even in my shabbiest home-made cloak, without injury to his nerves. Let me go and speak to him."

Mrs. Daly advanced a step or two to greet Miss O'Flaherty, and Anne thought that the last few weeks had made a change in her appearance too. The extreme air of invalidism was laid aside, her dress was brighter and more becoming, her step had more life in it, and there was actually a smile—was it a smile of triumph?—on her lips, as, laying a passive hand in Anne's, she said—

"I am very glad to see you are able to come out. Mr. Daly was getting quite anxious. We are so busy preparing for our departure that we did not know how to spare a day to drive to the Hollow. Yet we would not on any account have left the country for a length of time without saying good-bye to you."

Anne was well accustomed to the loose clasp of the hand, and to the peculiar sensation of being looked at without being recognized, with which the mistress of Castle Daly particularized her greetings to her, but the smile and the triumphant emphasis were something new. A fresh, and perhaps a more galling pin-prick wound than she had hitherto had to harden herself against in that place.

She would have received the remark in silence if the sound of an irritated tap of the foot from Ellen behind had not warned her that it was safest to rush into indifferent conversation at once.

"You are preparing for a departure already, I see," she said, stooping down to pick up one of the pillows Ellen had thrown down; "and the person you are sending away is an invalid, I fear, from Ellen's preparations."

"It is well for Ellen's patients when there is someone to look after their comforts beside herself," remarked Mrs. Daly, with a severe glance at certain cushions and shawls that had rolled down the steep steps and were being trampled under the servants' feet. "A few minutes ago she was ransacking the house for comforts for Murdock Malachy, who is to be removed to the hospital in Galway to-day, and you see where her preparations are now. You know, I suppose, Ellen, that you threw down the bottle of wine you begged so hard for, and that its contents are soaking your own woollen shawl down there."

"Mamma, you will let me have another," pleaded Ellen, her eyes full of tears, and her face one crimson glow of shame and mortification. "I know I'm very silly, but indeed I could not help it when I saw Cousin Anne."

"Cousin Anne is not much obliged to you for pleading the sight of her as a sufficient excuse for silliness. I think you might have found something pleasanter to say about her on her first introduction to your uncle."

"Come, come; never mind," put in Sir Charles Pelham, who was not proof against the sight of tears in such pretty eyes as Ellen's, and thought his sister rather hard on her daughter at times. "Let Ellen run in and get another bottle of wine, and permit me to shake hands with Miss O'Flaherty, of whom I have heard so much. The child is a good child enough. You should take her as she is, and make allowance for blundering."

"That is kind," said Anne; "if you will make allowance for blundering I see a hope of our all getting on."

Sir Charles was puzzled. The warm smile and gracious cordial air contradicted anything of sarcasm he might have suspected in the words.

"A much better-looking woman than I expected, and quite the lady. I wonder why Elinor hates her so!" was

his mental verdict; while Anne, reading his thoughts in the slow glances of his eyes backwards and forwards between herself and Mrs. Daly, came to her own conclusion.

"He has prejudices, but he is a man," she thought, "and therefore capable of justice; *he* would never, if he watched us for twenty years, arrive at understanding the feeling that obliges us two poor women always to show the worst side of ourselves to each other. No, not if he knew—as of course he cannot know—that one of us never forgets that she has before her the woman who has married the man she loved, and the other that she is talking to the woman who refused the man she has married."

A little commotion among the crowd round the car now recalled Mrs. Daly's and Sir Charles's attention to the subject that was occupying them when Miss O'Flaherty made her appearance. Ellen returned from the back premises with the news that poor Murdock was really coming out now, and a dozen eager, curious, sympathetic faces prepared for lamentation and condolence were turned towards the door.

"Is he so very bad?" asked Anne, catching sight of a bent figure, slowly crutching himself down the front hall, helped or rather hindered by an old woman, who supported an elbow, and broke out into tremulous "Ochones" and "Saints presarve us," at every painful step.

"This is precisely how it is," explained Sir Charles, taking the answer on himself. "If the lad had been sent off to an hospital a month ago, when the accident occurred, as I advised, he'd have been well by this time, and would have had nothing to remind him of his mishap for the rest of his life; but he has been kept here, with a dozen people fussing after him, exciting him with news, and setting aside the doctor's orders till it has become a serious case. I have interfered pretty strongly to have him sent away and put under proper treatment, for I saw it was his only chance of getting well."

"It's the thought of our going away, and of the parting with Connor, that has taken all the heart out of him, and hinders his recovery," whispered Ellen.

"Now, my good woman," exclaimed Sir Charles, as old Mrs. Malachy came within hearing, "do show a little self-

control, and help your grandson into the car without all that hubbub. You can't make his legs straight by crying over them; you only distress him and everybody near by your foolish outcries."

"By this and by that, is it stone and ice that ye think me heart's made of, that I'm not to weep and shed tears when I see me own boy, that was the light of me eyes, and all that I have left me in the world, barring the son that's breaking his heart, this minute in prison along of yer honour's orders, turned out a cripple, and helpless, to die in a strange place. I'll tell ye this plainly, yer honour, and my lady——" By this time, Mrs. Malachy had arrived full in front of Sir Charles and Mrs. Daly on the door-step, and, coming to a sudden halt, fixed on them two eyes in which a flash of angry fire seemed to burn up the tears. "I'll tell ye this plainly, if ye'd left the boy alone to die aisy in the bed where he was taken, afther he had been kilt at your door by a wild baste, it's broken-hearted I would have been, but I would not have had the sore angry heart I carry this day; I'd have borne the will of God ppaceable if ye'd let the boy die aisy under the roof that he loves."

"Then you are a stupid, ungrateful old woman," answered Sir Charles, not angrily, but in the cheerful decided tone, he thought, appropriate to uneducated old people, whose intellects could only be reached by strong words and shouting—"a very stupid and a wicked old woman, I should call you, to wish your boy to die in one bed instead of getting better in another. You ought to be extremely grateful to Mrs. Daly and to me for taking all the pains we have to find out an hospital where he'll be quickly cured, and to Mr. Pelham Daly for paying the expenses of his removal."

"Yer honour need not have been afraid that I should make a mistake about who it is we're beholden to, for this same sending away. Shure the names ye've spoken were in my heart, and on my lips, and I'll never forget them; but ochone! ochone! that it should be in this house that a hard thing is done by the orphan and the poor, that'll bring the curse of God down upon it."

"Come, come, my good woman," interrupted Sir Charles, putting his hand authoritatively on her shoulder, and giving

her a gentle shove down the steps, "you are behaving very ill; you had much better hold your tongue, cursing and that sort of thing cannot be allowed. I'm a magistrate myself in my own country, and I feel it my duty to put a stop to bad language, so get into the car at once; and perhaps Mrs. Daly will be good enough to forget your ungrateful conduct."

Molly tottered down the steps under the impulse of the shove, but turned round undaunted at the bottom to shake her withered fist at the house.

"Forgit, will she! No, yer honour, it's remimber, she will, one day, when she sees her own carried in the same way that mine's turned out. It's remimber my words she will."

"Be silent, you old hag," roared Sir Charles, thoroughly roused to anger at last. "How dare you frighten the ladies by your wicked nonsense! If you speak another word you shan't go to the hospital with your grandson. We'll leave you behind in Ballyowen to make acquaintance with the inside of your son's present lodging."

"Kindly welcome you are to take me where you plase, for it's against my will I go either way," said Molly, deliberately mounting the car, and dropping down in a heap in one corner of it. "I've said the word that was burning in me, and had to come out; and now word nor look, curse nor blessing, will the place git from me again."

"Someone lift the sick boy in, and let's have done with it," said Sir Charles, impatiently.

Murdock had remained on the top of the steps, pale and panting, after the exertion of moving down the hall; but when, in obedience to Sir Charles's orders, two servants lifted him into the car, he sent wistful glances round, as if in search of someone.

Ellen divined the meaning of the look, and whispered to him, while Anne settled the pillows under his head,

"You'll see Mr. Connor in Ballyowen, Murdock. He'll be waiting at the car-office to help you into the public car, and wish you good-bye again. He went in to-day to see your uncle, and he'll bring you good news of him."

"And the other young gentleman?"

"He has gone into Ballyowen to-day too with my father; but you don't want to see him, do you, Murdock?"

"If he'd cared to see me I'd have left a word for him now I know I'll die. He's your brother, Miss Eileen, and Mr. Connor's. And now I know I'll die, I'd not like ill-will to rest for ever betwixt us, for the sake of a dog that's dead."

"But you are not going to die, Murdock," said Anne, cheerfully; "the hospital is a very different place from what you think it; and before the month's out I'll come and see you there, and if you don't like your quarters I'll carry you off to Good People's Hollow, where I defy you not to live and get well, and where you'll hear every bit of news of Miss Eileen and Mr. Connor that comes to me."

A change came over the boy's face as if new life had been put into him.

"Thin maybe after all I will live—if Miss O'Flaherty says so. Maybe I will."

"Yes, I do say so—only keep up your heart till I see you again. And now good-bye."

Mrs. Daly had slipped her arm within her brother's arm, and come close to him during Goodie Malachy's harangue; and now she drew the shawl she wore closer round her and shivered a little.

"Let us go back into the house, it is cold here even in the sunshine. How glad I am we are leaving the country so soon. I am not in the least superstitious, fortunately; but I don't think I should ever have got that horrid old woman's threatening face out of my mind if we had stayed here."

"It's the stupid ingratitude of it that provokes me," muttered Sir Charles. "Ingratitude is the one thing I can't put up with; one meets only too much of it among the poorer class in England, I'll allow, but here it seems to be the rule that if you take particular pains to benefit a person, he hates and abuses you in proportion. And they call themselves a good-hearted people. That's what I don't understand."

"Is anyone ever grateful for being benefited against his will?" asked Anne.

"But while they are such ignorant savages as that old hag who cursed us just now, against their will is the only possible way of benefiting them."

"Then you must look out for some other kind of reward than gratitude."

Anne turned to Mrs. Daly. "You are really leaving the neighbourhood in a week's time, and the dear old house will be shut up?"

"Not altogether. A connection of Sir Charles Pelham's, who is going to act as Mr. Daly's agent, will occupy part of the house. It is a very good arrangement, and enables us to get away sooner than we otherwise should. Mr. Daly cannot bear to linger over a parting; and I confess I am in haste to be gone, for I don't think the place suits my eldest son. I have always hitherto denied myself the pleasure of having him with me on that account, and now we all feel that it is time he took his place in the family. You have not seen him yet, have you? He is out just now with Mr. Daly and Connor; but of course you have come to spend the day."

If the invitation had been twice as ungraciously given, Anne must have accepted it. She felt she must have one more day to add to the many long days spent in that house, which, glanced back upon, seemed to be stepping-stones in her monotonous stream of life—marking all its chief interests and pleasures. As she sat making company-conversation with Mrs. Daly in the drawing-room, or walked about the grounds with Sir Charles trying to listen to his stream of talk, she could not help recollections of past times rising one by one before her. The days when she used to ride over on her pony by her father's side—a proud little maiden of seven or eight—to spend holiday or birthday in playing with the two young cousins, with whom she enjoyed the nearest approach to brother and sister companionship she knew; the days she sat on the lawn with Dermot's lesson-books in her lap, and Dermot himself lolling on the grass at her feet, trying, with all the force of her will, to keep his erratic thoughts chained to his work for five minutes together, and feeling a little sore at heart all the time from a sense of the unpopular part her conscience obliged her to play. The day when they were fishing in a boat together on the lake, and he confided to her some school-boy scrape he had got into, and she persuaded him to confess it to his father and they went back to the house

together, to the very threshold of old Mr. Daly's study-door hand in hand. The day when Dermot out of perversity would make his horse take a desperate leap over a mountain torrent, and she had been startled by the pain she felt during the moment of suspense as to his safety, into taking herself to task about her feelings towards him for the first time. The summer day when light-hearted, winning Ellen Daly, the elder, pacing the flowery garden walks with her, told her the story of her love for the man who broke her heart afterwards. The day, a year after Ellen's ill-fated marriage, when Dermot, in a fit of despair and disgust with himself, had asked her to be his wife; and she, painfully weighing every word, had seen definitely how much and how little of love there was in the asking. The day of old Mr. Daly's death, when she had seen Dermot unhappy for the first time, and had half repented the decision she knew was so wise. The days when she had worked hard alone to beautify Dermot's house for the arrival of his English bride. The day when Dermot had come down to meet her in the hall with his baby heir in his arms. Sweet days, painful days—days marked by some pin-prick of a hard saying in them; days coloured with the soberer light of advancing middle-age, when the wounds given in the vivid days of youth were gradually being healed, and new interests and relationships were growing up; till such a day as this was reached when she could walk up and down the old paths philosophizing on her past feelings, and finding in the present that her strongest affections and interests centred round the young generation.

Old and new times seemed bewilderingly mixed up together as the day went on, and she found herself seized upon just as she used to be in long-past days, for private conference with one and another member of the family. Even Mrs. Daly, who had never condescended to so much intimacy before, held her back with a hand on her arm for a minute or two in the drawing-room, when the rest of the party went out for a walk, to say—

“If they speak to you on the subject, I hope you will say what you can to reconcile Ellen and Connor to the change we are making. You have great influence with Ellen; I wish you would make her see that her discontent

is very distressing to her father—I say nothing about myself.”

“But you should,” cried Anne; “nothing would be better for Ellen than to have such a motive as sparing you put before her, to help her to control her feelings.”

“It is not my way to speak about myself,” Mrs. Daly answered; “I suppose I should get more consideration if I claimed it, but I cannot speak of my own feelings.”

“Not even to her own daughter. What a strange thing that morbid reserve is,” thought Anne, as Ellen, who was waiting outside the door, seized the arm Mrs. Daly relinquished, and dragged her out into the garden.

“Now, let us go up to poor Aunt Ellen’s favourite turf walk under the larch trees, out of sight of mamma’s prim flower borders; there one can get a breath of air. Oh, Anne, do you know what it is to feel all day as if you could not breathe?”

“No, I can’t say I do,” said Anne, laughing.

“Of course not, for you never do or say things to make people disapprove of you, and look surprise at you out of their eyes, till you feel turned to stone. Anne, you can’t imagine how miserable it has all been here (for me) since Pelham and Uncle Charles came. You see I am so horrid that they can’t endure me; and it has opened mamma’s eyes wider than ever to all my faults! They try to like me. I can see that, and I study hard to please them, and watch every word; but just when I think I am succeeding, and begin to feel a little happy, out comes some unlucky speech from my real self, and they are disgusted with me again. It is very uncomfortable to be made so that one’s nearest relations can only like one when one is pretending to be different from what one is.”

It was certainly not a love story that this second Ellen Daly was telling in her aunt’s favourite walk; but it interested Anne quite as deeply as that other tale had done, as she looked down on the eager changeful face and wistful eyes fixed on her now.

“Anne, shall I be able to live at all, do you think, among those English relations of ours we’re going to, who, if Pelham describes them rightly, always say what they mean, and do what they intend, and will be for ever making allowance for Connor and me? Won’t I die

before I come back, and see the shadow of Lach-a-cree grow long on our own lake again?"

"No, certainly not," said Anne, "if you are the true-hearted Irish girl I take you for, with courage not to be ashamed of anything that is not really wrong, and spirit to take and give back a little ridicule kindly."

"It's not ridicule I'll mind, or get," said Ellen, sighing, "for I don't think that at Pelham Court the whole family have a laugh among them. It's my own brother's being ashamed of me that kills me, and the finding out that I always make a mistake and vex him most when I try hardest to please him."

"Say serve instead of please, and you'll find out how much better the trying answers," said Anne. "Ellen, avourneen, you like to be thought like me. Suppose it should turn out that the likeness between us is deeper than on the outside, and that the lesson set for you to learn in your life should be the same as mine."

"I should not think you ever needed to learn any lessons."

"Yes, this one, to put serve, instead of please, into my wishes, when I thought of those I loved best. You try that plan, and you will find what a great deal of trouble and what heartburns it saves you. Let people think of you as they will, and be content if you can only serve them."

"Oh dear, and it's so pleasant and sunshiny to please everybody. I do so like the way people here have of praising one at every moment. Uncle Charles and mamma say it's hypocrisy; but whether they mean it or not, it's very nice to hear, and I can't think how I shall ever bear to live where I'm just the same as everybody else to everybody. Anne, do you see that bit of a path beyond the house sloping up the mountain, where the shadow of that cloud lies so deep? I shall feel just like that all the time I am away. I shall be walking on, on through the dark, with not a bit of sunshine to warm me."

"And look further on, do you see what bright light the path opens out into when it fairly reaches the crest of the hill. We have made a little story out of it between us. Never mind how dark the shadowy bit is if it really takes

you *up*. That's all I ask for you, though you know I love you with all the veins of my heart, Eileen asthore. You are sure to get to the warmth and light sooner or later."

Ellen stood still on the turf walk, and took a long look round her.

"I'll see it all while I'm away, and it will help me," she said. "When things go wrong, and I feel unhappy, I'll say to myself, 'It's just a bit of the path;' and then I shall see the shadow of the cloud, and the road winding up through it, and coming out all clear and white and warm, into the sunshine at the top. But how long will it take climbing up through the dark part, I wonder?"

"I can't promise you that it may not take your whole life-time, avourneen," said Anne. "Never mind; hold your head up, and look towards the light at the end, and the shadows won't hurt you. I was told to give you a lecture on content, and you and I have managed it between us, in our own allegorical, Good People's Hollow fashion. Is not that your father riding towards the house with the boys? We had better go down to meet them, for I have not much longer to stay. I feel sure Peter Lynch is growing very impatient."

On the whole, Anne was not sorry that the remaining farewells and last words had to be short. She disapproved of the course her cousin had resolved to take, too energetically to make her good wishes for its success sound cordial or hopeful, and she was afraid of appearing to use her influence in opposition to the wishes of his wife and brother-in-law if she were tempted to make suggestions.

Mr. Daly made her take a turn or two up and down the terrace before the house while the car was being got ready, but to her relief he did not again attempt to discuss the wisdom or folly of his present plans, and hardly alluded to his approaching departure. His mind was full of the incidents of the morning when he had been into Ballyowen with his sons to attend the trial and procure the release of the prisoners who had been committed for stealing Pelham's dog.

He was bent on learning the impression that Pelham's looks had made on Anne, and taking her opinion respecting the particulars of his conduct on the occasion of his appearing in court, which he proceeded to relate to her.

"Like his mother, all over, is not he?" he began. "And how he is ever to get on, any more than she has done, with the people here, baffles me to think of. I wish you could have seen the two boys this morning in Ballyowen. The court was of course crowded. You know the sort of reputation Hill Dennis has of being a bold, desperate malefactor, whom no limb of the law has ever succeeded in laying hold of yet. The news that his still had been seized, and he himself committed to prison, spread like wildfire, and brought people from all parts of the country to see how he would comport himself before the magistrates. The boys were both summoned as witnesses, Pelham to swear to the identification of the dog, and Connor on behalf of the prisoners, to show how poor Lictor came into their possession. Connor, with all his brass, was by far the most nervous of the two; he was in a state of wild excitement as we rode into the town, and in the court-house sat biting his pocket handkerchief to pieces, and making grimaces like a mad creature. Pelham hardly spoke a word, and looked just as usual. I should have thought he was perfectly indifferent, if I had not chanced to touch his hand as we rode into the court-house yard, and found that it was as cold as a lump of ice. When his name was called he stepped forward at once, as if he were thoroughly used to the thing, and answered the questions put to him in a way that I could see made a favourable impression on the magistrates on the bench to-day; and just the contrary on the prisoner's partisans, crowding round the door and straining to catch every word. He really gave his evidence very well, just answering what was asked, with the bare truth, and showing no emotion either way. Dennis leaned out of the dock, and tried to catch his eye; but Pelham looked steadily straight before him, and saw no one but the lawyer who was questioning him. I had gone down into the crowd, and you can imagine the comments I heard. 'Could and dark and hard as never a Daly was before him,' was about the most favourable verdict I could pick up. A little time after, Connor's turn came: he slouched up, looking, I must confess, very like a school-boy who knows he has got himself into a bad scrape, pale and sullen, and somewhat overawed. What he had to say certainly was not very

creditable to himself: for a moment I thought his usual pluck had deserted him, and that he would show off badly. His first answer come out in a shaky, quavering voice, that was quite inaudible down below; but before he had done speaking, Dennis, stretching out his arms towards him over the dock, called out before anyone could stop him—'Spake up, thin, Mr. Connor dear, spake up; it's yerself knows the truth, and has the good heart to spake it out bould and clear, on behalf of them that trust ye. Connor turned round and looked at the prisoners, and his face quivered and trembled with excitement. For a moment I was afraid he was going to burst into tears, but he gave a great gulp, colour and resolution came back into his face, and after that—well, it would have taken a cleverer lawyer than there was there to get a word out of him unfavourable to the prisoners. He was questioned closely about his previous knowledge of Dennis's mountain retreat, and his acquaintance with what went on there, and you would have been amused with the keen wit and shrewdness he displayed in framing his answers.

"The history of the abduction of the dog he told readily and fairly enough, though even there he could not help slipping in a sentence or two that toned down the ridicule of the story, and gave a certain air of generosity to his own conduct in the matter that one would not have seen in it, certainly, but for his own showing, I don't mean to say that he said a single word that was not literally true, and I was actually carried away by the speciousness of his story at the time myself, as was everybody else that heard it. But, thinking it over, one sees the difference between his truth and Pelham's. For the life of him, I doubt whether that boy could speak of anything that nearly concerned himself, or anyone he cared for, without putting glamour into his words about it. Now, the other has bare truth on his lips, and would speak it straight out, if it carried death in it to the heart next his own."

"I respect such a character," cried Anne. "We all know too well what comes in the long run of putting the glamour over things. How impossible it is to see correctly, or reach what one is aiming at, when one walks in a mist of one's own raising, golden or dark. Connor's

evidence would make him very popular with the people in court?"

"And indeed it did. I hurried our getting out of the town as much as I could, for fear the expression of it should be too plain. Well, those boys have contrived out of their foolish quarrel about a dog to fix a character on themselves, and win hatred and love that will last them their lives, and go far to make or mar them, if I'm not much mistaken, seeing that one of them at least is likely to pass the best part of his life here."

"They could do much to help each other, if they would," remarked Anne. "So sober-minded an elder brother as Pelham might have a very happy influence on Connor's volatile character; while Connor, with his ready wit and art of winning popularity wherever he goes, might serve Pelham well, if once they learned to appreciate each other and came to be close friends as well as brothers."

"Ah, if—the question is how you are to bring ice and fire together without their being the death of each other. Have I not been trying it these nineteen years? No, Anne, don't look reproachfully at me as if I were again complaining of my lot, or failing to stand manfully by the choice I made. You had too much of that when I spoke to you at the Hollow last week, and I have come since to a better mind. It was the real thing that took hold of me that day when I rode up to Pelham Court, and had a glimpse of a sober-faced little girl sewing by an open window, and vowed to myself that I would not go away till I had brought a smile to the grave lips. 'Many waters cannot quench love.' I've read that somewhere, and true it is. We Dalys, though we are a feather-headed race, have hearts that hold what they fasten on with a tight grip, and for all that's come and gone, her smile—such a ghost of a smile as I ever get—is as much to me now as it was then; and I find I am as ready to pay heart's blood to win it. This leaving home is a great wrench," he continued, after a moment's pause, during which his eyes wandered over the landscape, from the dark, purple, cloudy ridge of the distant Marin Turk Mountains to the dancing waters of the lake, and the soft, bright sides of the upward swelling green hills near at hand, that stood out clear in the blue eastern sky. "A great wrench; and I know it will

be a weary, worthless sort of life I'll lead all the time I am away from here; but I'm fool enough to feel paid by the change the concession has made in her. She'll be able to endure me better when she gets me away from everything I care for that's not herself. I suppose that's the nature of women."

Anne thought privately that it was not her nature, but she only said: "I am glad you have told me this to-night; it makes me understand your going better. I did not like to think it was just shrinking away from trouble and work that had to be done."

"Perhaps I'm like Connor in putting a little glamour over my doings. It's odd the glimpses one gets into one's character, and how it looks to other people, by watching a reproduction of oneself in another generation. When I perceive the quiet contempt in which Pelham holds Connor, I begin to understand how it is that my wife has never succeeded in taking me at my own valuation. That brings me to the question we were discussing *before*—how those two lads are ever to pull together."

"I don't think you should be uneasy. You have yourself experienced how powerful is the attraction a strong, self-restrained, conscientious nature can exercise over a more impulsive volatile one. I should not despair of seeing a bond of more than common affection formed between Connor and Pelham. It may take some peculiar circumstance—perhaps some great trouble—to show the best side of each to the other; but you may depend upon it their lives won't pass without something arising to draw them together. It has never been the habit of your people to have their foes of their own household; and there have been brothers of your race before now, you know, who have gone to the death for each other."

"It is you, Anne, that always leave the word of comfort behind you. Who will I have to talk me out of my troubles when I'm away from you?"

"Well, good-bye. We have come to that, and there's no more to be said. I won't turn back to the house, for I had rather not inflict another leave-taking on Ellen. Send the car after me, and don't come back to put me in. Peter Lynch disapproves utterly of your leaving the

country. He won't bestow word or look upon you ; and he will make the horse dance if you come near."

CHAPTER VIII.

.... The light that lights them is not steady and polar, but variable and shifting ; waxing and again waning. Their conversation is accordingly. They will throw out a random word in and out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth. They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath, but must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatement. They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but *c'en* bring it to market in the green ear."—ELIA.

THE absence of its owner from Castle Daly had the double effect on Anne O'Flaherty of inducing her to shut herself up more than ever with her own subjects in her kingdom, as the little valley was called by its inhabitants, and of causing her thoughts to stray so often to the different localities from which letters directed in Ellen Daly's handwriting reached her, that she often told Murdock Malachy, whom she had taken into her service, when he limped in with the letter-bag, that she did not know whether she really spent most of her time in England or in Ireland.

The busy monotonous days and months slipped by in the Hollow. Anne did not grow less confidential with her servants and inferiors for having lost the only equal companionship within her reach, or for knowing that there was no Mrs. Daly near to look disapproving surprise on her eccentricities in this respect. A good deal of gossip reached her about the sayings and doings of Mr. Thornley, the English gentleman, a relative of Sir Charles Pelham, who had been sent over from England to manage Mr. Daly's affairs in his absence, and who with his sister had taken up his abode at Castle Daly. The accounts reached her filtered through the prejudices and coloured by the grudges (reasonably or unreasonably entertained) of the narrators ; and Anne listened sympathetically, as was her wont, without always troubling herself to unravel fact from fiction. A stranger who acted decisively on his own judgment, without condescending to consult old residents, and who in small things and great, from the granting of leases to the breeding of pigs, appeared by all accounts to have

diametrically opposite views from her own and Peter Lynch's, was pretty sure to go wrong, and sooner or later do serious mischief.

If Anne's conscience occasionally pricked her for having allowed herself to become a decided partisan on the popular side, she was sure the next day to be made acquainted with some fresh instance of harshness on Mr. Thornley's part that restored her to self-complacency by seeming to justify any amount of indignation. In some cases of what seemed to her positively unjust treatment of tenants, she thought it her duty to write and give Mr. Daly her opinion of his agent's conduct, and thence resulted an irritating correspondence which usually ended by Anne's having to acknowledge that the version of affairs which Mr. Thornley communicated to Mr. Daly in self-justification, while it materially differed from her own, was substantially the correct one, and that her interference had been ill-judged and uncalled-for. Once or twice Anne cut the discussion short before it reached this point by receiving the rejected tenants as settlers on her own domain, and found that she had introduced hopelessly bad sheep among her flock. If this discovery ought to have mollified her anger against Mr. Thornley, it did not; it only induced her to endorse heartily the sentiment of Peter Lynch—that there was “nothing but ill-luck to be expected in a country when mane-spirited, grasping nagurs had the rule in it; seeing they took all that was best for themselves, and nately shuffled all the burdens on to their neighbours' shoulders.”

One day, more than a year after their arrival in the country, Mr. and Miss Thornely rode over from Castle Daly to visit Good People's Hollow, bearing, in guise of an olive-branch, a package of rare flower-seeds and cuttings, which Sir Charles Pelham had transmitted to them from Pelham Court for Miss O'Flaherty's acceptance, and requested them to deliver with their own hands.

The visit was well-intentioned, but it did not prove happy or well timed. Anne had received a letter that same morning from Sir Charles Pelham, roundly accusing her of adding to Mr. Daly's difficulties by encouraging a disaffected spirit among his tenantry, and she was too seriously hurt by the accusation to be mollified even by a bribe of flower-seeds. Then it had given her a sharp pang to see two

strange figures, mounted on Mr. Daly's horse and Ellen's pony, approaching the house by the path along which she had so often watched the coming of her friends. The unaccustomed sounds of a sharp double-knock on the little-used front door, and of strange voices in a strangely high key asking in the hall for Miss O'Flaherty, jarred upon her nerves; and when at last the visitors were ushered into one of the turret rooms, their appearance so utterly contradicted Anne's anticipations, that she felt as much put out as if some one had given her the lie to her face.

The gentleman, who entered first, was most provokingly contradictory to all Anne's expectations. For the last eighteen months she had been picturing Mr. Thornley to herself as a hale, fresh-faced, obstinate-headed John Bull sort of a man, of the Sir Charles Pelham type, who would talk her down with loud-voiced self-assertion, or crush her good-humouredly with contemptuous patronage. The gentleman with whom she found herself shaking hands was, in the first place, much younger than she had expected, and had much more the air of a scholar than a man of business. He was thin, and not particularly tall, while face, whiskers, hair, and eyebrows partook of a general grey neutral tint that would have stamped the whole person with insignificance if the countenance had not been redeemed by the presence of a pair of very bright grey eyes, looking keenly out from under the sandy eyebrows, and by the play of the lips, which when speaking disclosed two rows of very white teeth, and when silent fell into a curve, that puzzled you to make out whether it was a smile or a sneer.

"That little whitey-brown grocer's apprentice to attempt to rule over us in the place of Dermot Daly. Phew!" thought Anne, and she dropped the hand she could not bring herself to shake cordially. The lady who followed and claimed Miss O'Flaherty's second greeting appeared to be about five or six years her brother's senior, and exaggerated in her person the neutral-tint effect produced by his, so that she gave Anne the impression of having been cut out, dress, face, hair, and all, from an immense sheet of packing paper. Both spoke in pleasant, well-bred tones, and brought out well-chosen remarks with a deliberation and air of good sense that reduced Miss O'Flaherty to a state of conscious idiocy, and robbed her of all possibility

of inventing appropriate replies. Yet though the conversation languished, her visitors were in no hurry to go away, and seemed to find sufficient amusement in looking about them with an air of intelligent investigation, such as would have become a European traveller in a Kamschatkan hut or Indian wigwam. They asked permission to examine the Good People's Hollow works of art that adorned the cheffoniers and chimney-pieces, and they did examine them thoroughly, passing little faintly laudatory remarks upon them to each other, that so put Anne past her patience, that she longed to end the talk by knocking together the two neutral-tinted heads bent critically over her treasures. Every now and then, while indifferent discourse went on, Anne felt that four thoughtful, cold eyes were stealing critical glances at herself, as at some strange, unaccountable possibly malevolent being, whose ignorant animosity was to be soothed away or rendered harmless by the charms of superior wisdom and a magnanimous example of tolerant goodwill. She went out of the room for a few minutes to order some additions to her luncheon, and on approaching the turret-room door was startled by hearing a laugh, actually a natural girlish and boyish fit of laughter, perpetrated by her prim visitors. Peeping in, she saw that Miss Thornley had lifted up a gaily-coloured feather flower wreath from the cheffonier, and was holding it round her brother's head, and making him admire the effect in the cracked looking-glass above the chimney-piece. Connor had cracked the glass long ago, and Anne knew well how distorted everything looked in it.

The two faces had now a tinge of colour and light in them, and the white teeth showed agreeably, but it did not propitiate Anne to find that her guests' stupidity was due to her presence, and that they could be animated at her expense. After luncheon they took a walk through the valley to examine some new cottages Anne was building, and to talk to Peter Lynch about the draining of the bog lands on the hill-side, and the other agricultural improvements for which the valley was famous.

Anne read on Peter Lynch's stolid face a fixed determination not to let a word of useful information be dragged from him by her present visitors, even if he were to be torn by wild horses for his silence, and for peace's sake

contrived to leave her prime minister to the lady's management, and monopolize the company of the gentleman herself. He did not like it, and tried at first to show his indifference to any information on matters of business that came from a lady, by restricting his communications with Miss O'Flaherty to remarks on the scenery, and by turning back to Peter Lynch when he wished to ask a question respecting the nature of the soil or the works he saw carried on. Anne could not help enjoying the puzzled look that Peter's astounding replies brought upon his face. In despair, at last he came back to her, and against the will of both they were drawn, by the vital interest that each took in the topics that opened up, to throw off restraint and talk freely. Anne had the most to say at first. It was the wisdom or folly of the work of her life that was in question, and somehow it was no longer an insignificant countenance into which she looked up as she talked. It was the thoughtful, pondering face, young and yet strangely old, of a deeply interested inquirer, whose verdict she could not help eagerly wishing to win for her own views. The questions he asked showed that he had thought a great deal on the subjects he was investigating, and Anne answered and argued, and her words flew out faster and faster, and began to take colour from her hopes instead of her experience, till she found herself expounding unreservedly to this stranger some of the most cherished dreams and aspirations of her solitary hours. This was while they were investigating the industrial works and chief points of interest in Anne's little domain: peeping into the new cabins, and measuring the depths of the drains, and pacing the dimensions of the potato plots won from the bottom of the bog; while Mr. Thornley's eyes were occupied with looking as well as his ears with listening. After a lengthened progress they returned to the house by a mountain path where there was nothing to be examined; then Mr. Thornley took his turn to speak, and Anne walked by his side, listening and wishing that she could take back and hide every one of her words. His were quiet and polite enough. He spoke from the calm heights of logical deductions, and proved by well argued and thoroughly established laws of other people's finding out, how baseless all Anne's expectations were;

how sure her work was to fall to pieces and fail in the long run ; and how miserably inadequate her little bit of partial experience was to set against the world-wide, often proved wisdom on which he founded his theories. As he talked, a huge, crushing, iron monster called Political Economy seemed to loom for the first time on Anne's vision, before whose Juggernaut wheels the prosperity of her populous little valley must inevitably be ground to powder some day. And the demolisher of her bright visions did not appear to find anything to regret in the results he foresaw so plainly. He stood still and looked over the valley lying bright in the golden sunset, where the labourers stood in groups about the gates of their little garden enclosures, and the women came out and put the babies into their fathers' arms, and children filled the air with joyous evening clamour ; and talked quite calmly of the inevitable evils attending on the subdivision of land, and the certainty that an over-stimulated population like the one he was surveying must come at last to the point of being decimated by want and sickness. He did not particularly regret that it should be so. Law was law, fortunately inevitable and unvarying ; and the object most to be desired was that its workings should be fully understood and recognized, and that ignorant individual action should be restrained. What did the disappointments and losses of the inhabitants of an obscure valley signify, if only the great principles on which the world progressed were justified and made plain ?

For a moment or two Anne hated him with all the strength of her vehement, unreasonable Irish heart ; and then, glancing up into the old young face, she caught an expression on it that softened her and changed her indignation into a smile of wonder.

The far-away eyes were so clearly not looking at anything near, but watching the imaginary march of great systems and the results of long ages, with such a strange unindividual interest, that she could not bring out the charge of heartlessness that was on her lips. It was a sort of enthusiasm that changed the grey, insignificant face, and quickened it with life and power : an incomprehensible enthusiasm for some ideal far out of her sight, yet its existence gave her a glimpse into a mood she could

sympathize with better than with the hard sense the words professed. The sentence she did bring out instead of the indignant reproof that had risen to her lips, was perhaps more disgusting than the reproof would have been to her companion.

"You are young yet," Anne said, with a deep sigh; "if you live to be as old as I am, and by chance get interested in the lives and troubles of the poor people you reside among—I think you could—you will learn to be glad to take the most practical way that comes to hand of rescuing them from present degradation and suffering, and you will leave remote consequences to take their chance."

"I shall know that the remote consequences must come when they are due. I shall not expect by any efforts of mine to bring about results which economical and social laws are dead against."

"You speak about laws as if they were alive," cried Anne; "horrible, heartless things—I don't believe in them, I believe in God, and I don't think He is ever dead against any honest effort to do good to our fellow-creatures, even if it be a somewhat mistaken one. He will take care that some good, physical or moral or spiritual, comes out of it somehow."

Mr. Thornley shrugged his shoulders; his face changed to its ordinary grey quietude, and the light of enthusiasm died out. Here were questions brought up which he had decided did not concern him, into the discussion of which he absolutely and always refused to be drawn. It was his turn now to wish to call back his words, regretting the pearls of wisdom he had cast away. What was the use of explaining principles to a woman, since women never can be touched by anything beyond the range of their own experience, and will not consent to consider the most practical question without intruding subtleties of speculation or emotion that can only lead astray?

There was a strange light in Anne's eyes too as she raised them up from her valley beyond its protecting hills to the golden gates of the sunset, the sight of which troubled him, and woke that unreasonable yearning in his heart kept down habitually at the cost of so much pain. He would not be tempted on to such dangerous ground by anyone.

When Anne had done gazing skyward and walked on, he stooped and gathered a handful of eyebright and sundew, and for the rest of the way home talked diligently of botany and nothing else. Anne walked by his side silent and annoyed; she had felt rather than seen the shrug, and if there was a thing specially repugnant to her, it was the being obliged to discourse or listen to discourse on indifferent subjects with a full heart.

Miss O'Flaherty's hospitality obliged her to bring her visitors into the lodge to take coffee before they set out on their long ride home; and just as they were saying good-bye, Miss Thornley contrived by almost her last words to put a crown on all the petty offences of the day. She stopped before a portrait of Ellen Daly that hung in the entrance hall.

"Ah, look here, John," she said; "this is evidently another likeness of the girl whose portrait used to hang over the chimney-piece in the library at Castle Daly."

"Used to hang!" cried Anne sharply.

"Yes, the library is one of the rooms we are occupying now, and Mr. Daly kindly begged us to make any changes in them that we found convenient. We are not particular as to furniture and comfort, John and I, but we have lived abroad a good deal at various times, and we like the pictures about us to be good if we have any at all. We ventured to dethrone the portrait, which was rather an eyesore, and substituted an engraving we brought with us. But I assure you the painting is safe; I carried it up to a dry attic, and covered it over carefully myself."

Mr. Thornley came up and peered with half closed-eyes at the canvas. "Yes, certainly, it is a portrait of the same young lady, but rather better painted, I think."

"The picture at Castle Daly is thought to be particularly well painted by everyone about here," remarked Anne stiffly.

"Young Mr. O'Roone seemed to admire it immensely, I remember," said Miss Thornley, with a smile at her brother that protested against their being bound by the taste of any Mr. O'Roone. "He was very much disposed to quarrel with John for taking it down, but we wanted a good light for our engraving, and it did not occur to us that we were committing an enormity."

They called each other John and Bride, and said "we" and "us" with tones and looks of perfect mutual understanding and confident sympathy, such as can only exist between people of thoroughly congenial characters who have lived long together, and which have a tendency to make outsiders feel somewhat put out of court. Anne just then thought their manners detestable.

When the door closed behind the brother and sister she went back to do homage before her darling's portrait, and atone to it for the slight put upon its counterpart. The colouring might be a little gaudy, the attitude wooden, but what could people be made of who found even an imperfect representation of that face an eyesore?

The artist had really managed to put something of the true expression in the pictured eyes, or Anne looked till she conjured it up. Wistful, tender, gay, eager and timid all at once, a dozen different and contradictory qualities beaming out their expression through the soul's wide-open windows, blending into a look, a spell, a charm, that if it had not power to "wile fish out of the water, and water out of a stone," might surely have won tolerance, if not admiration, from the most supercilious of English hearts. That the Thornleys could resist it, settled their place for ever in Anne's estimation.

CHAPTER IX.

"*Dulce ridentem, misero quod omnes
Eripit sensus mihi, nam simul te,
Lesbia, aspexi nihil est super mi
[Quod loquar amens ;]
Lingua sid torpet, tenuis sub artus
Flamma demanat, sonitu snopte
Tintinant aures, gemina teguntur
Lumina nocte.*"

CATULLUS.

A RAINY autumn, and an unusually severe winter, when the mountain roads were almost impassable, excused Miss O'Flaherty from being in any haste to return the Thornley's visit. The months of Mr. Daly's absence crept on, till yet another summer and winter were passed, and the third year of his absence was reached. Anne's letters from England began to be less frequent, and sometimes

brought news that made her look grave as she read, even though she knew that Murdock Malachy, who was now permanently installed in her service, was studying her face, and was resolved not to leave the room till he had received his share of news. Mrs. Daly, instead of growing stronger in her native air, had become a more confirmed invalid, and was constantly changing from place to place in search of the health and comfort that seemed to fly from her. Anne wondered whether it was the disappointment that so frequently follows the fulfilment of a long cherished wish that was making her life a burden to her. Connor, after twice running away from two different English schools, and narrowly escaping expulsion from a third, finally got his way and was entered at Trinity College, Dublin, whence Anne and Murdock too received gay letters, containing accounts of wild freaks and rhapsodies about new friendships, sometimes too, promises of speedy visits, which, however, never came off.

Occasionally, with the letter, came a newspaper adorned with verses in the poet's corner, signed, "Connor of the Double Sword." Anne sometimes laughed and sometimes cried over her first reading of these productions, but was never able to manage the second dispassionate perusal she intended. Somehow or other the newspaper, however carefully hidden away, was sure to vanish in the course of the morning, and did not return to her possession till the paper was in holes and the printing worn away by the numerous unfoldings and handlings it had undergone from those to whom Murdock Malachy had not had the heart to deny the privilege of looking at Mr. Connor's "poetry and music wid their own eyes." There was, however, no danger of Anne's forgetting the words; they seemed after that to have got into the air, and to be always coming back to her borne on voices which, if they disfigured them as to accent, at least gave them emphasis enough.

Those were the years of O'Connell's trial and imprisonment, and the verses were of course patriotic, and such as did not lose any force by want of decision in the sympathies of the writer.

Pelham was reported to be quietly and creditably keeping his terms at Oxford, "and learning," Ellen's letters said, "to tolerate me better than he used to do. I rise

in his estimation," she wrote, "when he brings any of his friends home, and finds that at sight of me they are not exactly shocked; and that even when I do perpetrate bulls and slip out an Irish phrase in an Irish accent, they think me worth talking to. Between ourselves, this same talking is often hard work for me. Pelham's friends are all cut out so exactly on the model of himself. I am obliged to run away every now and then to laugh by myself, they do make such a blushing and stammering over a few soft words; such as Darby O'Roone would have turned off his tongue as easily as he would have said good morning, meaning as little by them. I get very tired of the talk, that I daren't put any spirit into, from fear of being misunderstood, but I bear it, for it brings a little kindness for me into Pelham's eyes, and pleases poor Mamma. Oh, Anne, I have quite made up my mind that those two will never approve of me—of my very self—out of their own hearts, so I try to be content with little bits of reflected favour when they catch sight of me in a light that is not bad in other people's eyes. Sometimes I am afraid it will almost make a hypocrite of me, I do strive so hard to make people I don't care for think well of me, that I may wear their good opinions like ornaments round me, and so look a little less despicable to those whose approval I covet so earnestly. It is very freezing work. You see Connor is generally away from home, and his letters give Mamma a bad headache, and Papa pockets them, his share and mine, too, to take them out of the way of comments, and carries them off to read over and over to himself or to his friends. Now I come to the worst of all my complaints. I hardly like to write it even to you, Anne. We see very little of Papa now, he hardly seems to belong to the house. There is nothing for him to do in the dull little houses, where we never stay long enough to get a home-like feeling. Of course he makes friends wherever we go, but I fancy somehow they are not the sort of people he cares for Mamma and me to be intimate with, and Pelham looks down upon them, because you see they are generally Irish and poor, and I daresay rather queer, like you and me. I know they would suit me a great deal better than Pelham's friends. Sometimes when we are sitting prim in the drawing-room, and I hear a loud knock

at the front door, I rush out and lean over the bannisters, just to catch the sound of voices that bring a whiff of home with them, or to hear a laugh or a joking word that has some heart in it. Then I peep and see Papa come out and slip his hand under some shabbily-coated arm and stroll out of the open door into the street, talking and laughing, and looking a little bit like his old self. How I long to follow him! I daresay they are going to some place that would not suit me, or he would let me come; but, oh! my whole soul goes out in longing for one free day—such a day as Connor and I used to have in plenty at home. An old man, with very ragged grey whiskers, and wisps of reddish hair round his bald head, who often comes, caught sight of me one day, and Papa made me come down, and said who I was. He is a doctor; his name is Lynch; and, Anne, I do believe he is a relation of Peter's. He said he lived close to Good People's Hollow in his early days, and that you were the light of his eyes and the jewel of his heart; he called me Miss Eileen, and said I was like you. I could have thrown my arms round his neck and kissed him, and I believe I should if Pelham had not come out of his study just then, and stood on the landing swelling with disgust at it all. The house is very still and dead, when the front door closes behind Papa and his friends. I creep back to the drawing-room, feeling very guilty, and Mamma turns her sad eyes reproachfully on me, and I fancy she must be reading all the longings that are in my heart, and I hate myself vehemently for pining after things that used to pain her. So I go up and down. It is a very shadowy bit of road I am walking up now, and it is only now and then that I can get a far-off glimpse of light beyond. The now and then is generally on Sundays, when Mamma and I and Pelham go to church together. Pelham has decided, as Connor did when he went last year to Trinity College, to be confirmed in the English Church; and I am very glad, though it does put another barrier between them and Papa. I never might talk to you, Anne, about this one subject that we both care most about, but I will say now that I used to envy you dreadfully for going on Sundays where you could pray among the poor, and that I found it very difficult sometimes to feel right in our own church, where there were only a few

respectable people, and the going there seemed chiefly a mark of distinction between Mamma and me, and our neighbours. Here it is all different, and I am learning to understand what the teaching of our Church is, and that its chief merit does not consist in denying what other people believe: that is the one bit of light that has come to me here."

Mr. Daly's letters were even less satisfactory to Anne than Ellen's. There was a tone of recklessness and indifference about them that grieved her. He was clearly unhappy away from home, but he seemed to be sinking into a state of listless acquiescence in idleness and self-reproach, and as time went on spoke less and less frequently of the possibility of return.

With the view of rousing him, and tempting him back to his duties, Anne wrote constantly, dwelling not only on the unsatisfactory condition of the neighbourhood, where the effect of the first partial failure of the potato crop was being felt in wide-spread distress, but mentioning, without scruple, her conviction that Mr. Thornley had neither experience nor judgment to act judiciously in the circumstances that seemed likely to arise, and taking it on herself to repeat some of Murdock's and Peter's stories to his disadvantage. Sometimes Mr. Daly roused himself to inquire into particulars, and then followed references to Mr. Thornley himself, and such a sifting of evidence as made great havoc in Peter's statements, but generally failed to satisfy Anne, who could not bear to give up her follower's veracity. The most important result of these controversies was the prevalence of an opinion spread far and wide about the country that Miss O'Flaherty was ready to uphold everyone, whatever their deserts might be, who "went agin" the Protestant English agent, and that to thwart or outrage him was a sure passport to protection from her. Anne began to be a little shocked and alarmed at the fervour of partizan enthusiasm that greeted her whenever, according to her wont, she and Peter Lynch made their appearance at the fairs and markets at which her people congregated. She tried to put down the groans and execrations of the Thornleys that alternated with blessings on herself; but Peter Lynch refused to second her, and her applauders told her to her face "To spare her swate breath, for they

knew better than she did herself how it was wid her heart, and that black Protestants and nagurs were as hateful to her as to themselves."

Anne could not be surprised that she received more and more indignant letters from Sir Charles Pelham on behalf of his young relative; that Mr. Thornley proudly signified his determination to resign his appointment if any further report of his doings, from Miss O'Flaherty, were listened to by Mr. Daly; and that when once or twice in the course of the next summer she made an attempt at a peace-making call of ceremony at Castle Daly, she was met at the door by a civil but decided "Not at home."

This rejection of civilities did not, however, put an entire stop to intercourse. As the anxious months passed on, there was an inevitable drawing together and increase of intimacy among all those whose business it was to take measures to alleviate the dire misery that was certain now to come. Anne O'Flaherty and the Thornleys met pretty frequently through the early autumn on public committees and at the houses of mutual acquaintances, where plans for the distribution of relief were being laid. They did not keep out of her way, and they did not seek her, and she could not but acknowledge that there was dignity in their bearing towards her, the dignity that comes of conscious right-doing.

The brother seemed to have grown thinner and paler since he came into the country, and the sister looked anxious. One day, after a meeting at the house of the Protestant clergyman at Ballyowen, when Anne, a comparative stranger to her hosts, was standing a little apart and not joining in the conversation, she overheard Miss Thornley complain to the clergyman's wife of the weary length of the hours when she sat alone in the evenings, watching for her brother's return home, and confess that terribly anxious thoughts would come when he chanced to be a little later than usual. "It was not mere nervousness," she said. She had never found it hard to be alone in her life before, and she could not comfort herself by thinking that her terrors had any fancy or exaggeration in them—the danger was only too real. Threatening letters were placed about the premises, or thrust into the crevices of the doors and windows almost every night now; and

she could not but think that the lonely road by which her brother returned from Ballyowen to Castle Daly was watched. The evenings were tolerably light still, but what would it be when the autumn closed in, with the winter to follow? She confessed she dreaded it.

Mr. Thornley here caught sight of Anne's horrified face, and made an imperious sign of silence to his sister. Anne pondered over that look and the comprehending glance Miss Thornley gave her brother back for long hours, as she drove home through the dark night by Peter Lynch's side, as safe in the loneliest part of the mountain road as by her own fireside. She understood quite well what the two looks meant. They thought her their enemy, through whose adverse influence the danger had grown up round them, and not for worlds would they let her have a glimpse of its effect on them, or abate a jot of their pride, by seeming to appeal to the compassion of one who misjudged them. There was plenty of spirit, ay, and of deep and delicate feeling too, concealed by those grey masks of faces. Anne began not to like to think of the character in which she must figure in that anxious-eyed sister's thoughts. She did not sleep well that night, and when she came down in the morning, with her head full of the Thornleys still, she found a long letter of Ellen Daly's on the breakfast table, and seized upon it eagerly, hoping it would send her thoughts and interests comfortably into their usual channel. Before she had finished the first page she uttered an expression of surprise, which so alarmed Murdock Malachy, who was standing stock still in the middle of the room, with the toast-rack in his hands, watching her as she read, that she felt obliged to look up, and say, re-assuringly, "No, there is nothing amiss; they are all quite well, Murdock; but Miss Ellen has curiously enough made the acquaintance, at the sea-side place in England where they are living now, of a young sister of Mr. and Miss Thornley, and I am surprised at the description she gives of her."

"The thieves of the world, thim Thornleys," cried Murdock, dropping the toast-rack to scratch his head. "But it's a quare thing that they should be *iverywhere*. It'll be for no good, Miss O'Flaherty, dear, that another of the black-hearted brood have got round Miss Eileen where she

is now. It'll be mischief they're scheming together, the two here and the one there of them."

"I wish I could hope that there was no mischief afoot but of Mr. and Miss Thornley's scheming," said Anne, severely; and fixing her eyes on Murdock's face, which changed a little, she added, "Can you tell me, Murdock, what has become of your uncle, Dennis Malachy, since he left the little place Mr. Daly put him into before he went away? Do you ever hear of him now? Is it true what you told me about his having quitted the neighbourhood for ever?"

"Do I know what has become of my uncle since the day whin, by Mr. Thornley's orders, the roof was taken off the bit of a cabin the master gave him, and he was left wid-out a place to put his foot in? It's that you're asking me?"

"Yes; I want to know. You told me once that he had gone to America."

"And why would not he have gone?"

"Only as we passed by Lac-na-Weel, last night, I thought I saw a light in the roofless cabin, and heard voices."

Murdock craned his neck over the table, so as almost to whisper in his mistress's ear—

"Maybe the boys were houlding a meetin' there; or maybe it was only one or two who had come together peaceably to hear a bit of Mr. Connor's poetry read, and taste a dhrop of poteen that they had brought."

"Well, I hope you were not there yourself, Murdock," said Anne; "you know I don't allow my people to belong to secret societies."

"And right you are there," replied Murdock, stooping down to pick up the scattered pieces of toast with his fingers, and placing the toast-rack before his mistress with an ostentatiously meek expression of face that warned Anne of the uselessness of attempting to get further information out of him.

She turned back with a sigh to her letter, and read over again the passage that had provoked her exclamation.

"Did not someone say that the world must be quite a small place because everybody he met knew someone he knew? Have I expressed that properly without a bull? Well, I have had an instance of that sort of thing myself lately, and it has interested me so much that I must write it to you. First, let me tell you that I am much happier

than when I last wrote in the spring, partly because Connor has come from Dublin to spend his vacation here, and partly on account of an acquaintance that has grown out of the adventure I am going to relate. You will say it is the oddest coincidence when you hear. Whitecliffe Bay, where we have been living for the last three months, is a very gay little place, especially in the autumn. There are miles and miles (Pelham would bring me down to yards, but I will indulge in amplitude of speech when I write to you) of parade crowded with visitors, and below and beyond there is a region of wet white sand, broken up with big boulder stones and jutting-out ledges of rock. This is usually given up to regiments of nursemaids and digging children. Connor hates these haunts of Cockneydom, as he calls them, and in our walks hurries me at breathless speed through the populous district till we get beyond a certain rocky wall, where the beach is so solitary that we can almost fancy ourselves on our own shore again, and where he can make speeches to the stones, as he used to do at home. One day when we had had a great deal of poetry, and Connor had come out of his heroic into his ridiculous vein, he insisted on climbing up into a hollowed-out mass of rock and giving me a series of imitations of lectures by Dublin Professors. He said such absurd things, and made himself like so many different people, that I tired myself out with laughing. In a pause, we heard an echo of my laugh, stifled but very distinct, come from the other side of the stone. Connor jumped down like a shot, and almost fell over a young lady who was seated comfortably at the foot of his rostrum on the shady side with a large sketching-board on her lap. Her face grew as crimson as his when she saw we had found her out, and she looked up at me in an appealing way (I never saw such pretty brown eyes before), and said, 'Indeed I did not mean to listen. I was busy sketching, and did not know what was going on for a long time, and afterwards I really could not help laughing.' Her mouth quivered again as she spoke, and she peeped up from under her curly dark eye-lashes at Connor, as if she were very anxious to know what kind of creature all that rodomontade had come from. I was charmed, but Connor walked off, down, I could see, in the very lowest depth of glumness. 'It did not make

it any better for him,' he said, 'that it was only a girl, and such a very pretty one, who had overheard his nonsense; he was all the more disgusted at being caught making a fool of himself.'

"We met the same young lady again afterwards on the sands, sometimes with a troop of children who seemed to be under her charge. Connor called her 'the girl with the shabby bonnet,' and I 'the girl with the pretty eyes.' She used to purse up her mouth and look demure as we passed, and I don't believe we should ever have spoken to her if it had not been for another little incident which these same children brought about. We came upon her one evening standing by the edge of the water, looking very angry and ready to cry. Two of the boys had perched themselves on a high white stone round which the tide had flowed. She wanted them to get down, and they were riotously daring her to come and make them. It was only a narrow streak of water, but it would have spoiled her neat boots and her fresh muslin skirt to wade through it. It is true about the bonnet and all the other poor little clothes being shabby, but she manages to put them on with a dainty air that I could not give to silks and satins. I saw her glance down at her little feet and her pink flounces, and tears of vexation swelled up into her big brown eyes. I made Connor look. In a minute he strode over the water and was back again with a kicking boy under each arm. We walked back with her to the house where her aunt and uncle live, Connor keeping the boys in good order, and bringing them back to the height of good humour with such stories as only Connor can tell; and since that evening we three—or rather I should say we ten, for I must include the seven boisterous cousins—have been the fastest of fast friends. We did not find out who she was at first. The aunt's name was Maynard, and we called her Miss Lesbia—she has the misfortune to own that *sonnetical* name—and after a while Babette and Baby, as the boys call her. The fun is, that Pelham took a great disgust at our friendship. It is to be confessed that at first we talked about the Maynards night and day. 'Are they respectable people?' he asked. 'They don't keep a gig,' was all the satisfaction he could ever get from Connor. To satisfy himself, he used to come down to the Parade to watch us through an opera-glass as we

set out and came back from our boating excursions. He pronounced that Miss Maynard was not in the least pretty—quite plain, in fact, and in bad style—just the sort of friend he should have expected Connor and me to pick up and rave about. Yet though his judgment was so decided, one sight of her plainness did not content him. Somehow or other he was always there watching. Now there is this about our Babette—she has such a kind heart she can never bear to leave anybody out of her liking. She expects everyone to be friends with her, and I even think that the more people stand aloof from her the more interest they have for her, and the more resolute she is to win them. One day when we were all setting forth on a long expedition, and Pelham was lingering forlornly about, she just looked up at him with her large, babyish brown eyes, and said, ‘You are coming too, are not you?’ and he came. Not that once only. He has quite turned over a new leaf. He leaves his books in the morning, and sits out with us on the beach while Connor reads ‘Lalla Rookh’ aloud. He joins our afternoon walks as a matter of course, and gets into the boat of an evening uninvited. Connor quizzes his shy, grave efforts to make himself agreeable, and Lesbia laughs; but Pelham, though he is not witty, can give a good hard, effective snub in self-defence now and then. When he administers one to Connor, it is like putting a lid on to a jack-in-the-box. Connor is effaced for the moment, to flash up again at an unexpected opportunity, and Lesbia in a fright makes haste to twist the joke into something that sounds like a compliment to Pelham, and so restores peace. I am not sure that the boys are really learning to like each other better, but at all events we, sister and brothers, spend more of our time together, and have more things in common to talk about, than we ever had before in our lives; and, Anne, is it not odd that we should owe this to the sister of Uncle Charles’s grand favourite, John Thornley—the man you dislike so much. It’s true. Connor’s Lesbia is actually sister to the brown-paper man and woman you described to me. I have been a long time coming to the fact, for it was very long in coming to me. I knew a great deal of Lesbia’s history before her real name came out. It is a very sad history and fits the grave brother and sister you describe better than

our pretty Lesbia. Their father, though he was a near relation of Uncle Charles, seems to have been a very imprudent man, and his conduct so offended his cousins, Dr. and Mrs. Maynard, that they dislike the very mention of his name, and acquiesce gladly in the mistake strangers naturally fall into of calling Lesbia Miss Maynard instead of Miss Thornley. There were several Thornley brothers and sisters at one time, but all are dead now except these three. I wish Lesbia was not subject to be seized with fits of shyness whenever anything, about the troubles they all had to bear in their father's lifetime, comes out in the course of conversation; for it seems to me, from little words she has let drop now and then, that the grave brother and sister must have done some things that were rather fine, and I should like to hear more about them. They have had to work—actually work—with their own hands like common people to help the others in very bad times. Lesbia speaks of them with a kind of loving awe that impresses me greatly. It seems there is a rich old uncle on the mother's side, and when their mother died he offered to adopt his grand-nephews and nieces and take them to live with him if they would adopt his name and solemnly promise never to hold any further communication with their father, who was abroad at the time. There were four nearly grown-up brothers and sisters then, and Lesbia tells me they held a family council over the letter, and decided not to accept their grand-uncle's offer. They would not give up their father or their name, which they did not consider he had in any way disgraced, and they did not choose to be dependent on a relation who had allowed their mother to die in poverty. They agreed, however, that Lesbia, who was then only ten years old, ought not to be bound by their resolve, and they made a compromise about her. They sent her here to live with their mother's cousin, Mrs. Maynard, and wrote to the grand-uncle begging him to wait for her determination till she was old enough to make it for herself. He never answered the letter, and he has not taken any special notice of Lesbia since, though he is on good terms with his relations here, and sends presents to their children sometimes. I think Lesbia almost hopes he has forgotten her existence. She dreads having a decision to make; she could not bear to separate herself

from her brother and sister; and yet she acknowledges that luxury and riches would be great temptations to her. I can see they would, by the disgust with which she often looks at her own shabby bonnets and faded gowns. Why do I tell you all this? I am coming to the reason soon; but first I must explain the link between us and the Thornleys that sent them to Castle Daly. Uncle Charles was mixed up at one time in some of the speculations that brought the elder Mr. Thornley to grief; and it was the eldest son's conduct, when the father's difficult affairs came to be wound up, that inspired our wise uncle with such an opinion of his ability that he would not believe anyone could set our affairs to rights so well as he. I asked Lesbia one day if the appointment had been good for her brother, and to my surprise she shook her head and began to cry; and when Connor and I tried to comfort her by going into raptures about the country, and telling her how we longed to live there again ourselves, she put a letter from her sister into my hands, and begged me to read it. It was a very clever letter, full of little touches of description that made me cry out with longing for home; but at the end came an allusion to some danger which she seems to believe hangs over her brother, and threatens his life. It was only a word or two, but they were such grave, quiet words, that I felt they meant more than they expressed. Anne, is this danger all a delusion, or is there a grain of truth in it? I will not believe in more than a grain, especially as Miss Thornley insinuates that you have used your influence to prejudice the people against her brother, and that you are to blame somehow for his not being safe at Castle Daly. I'll tell you what you must do to open her eyes. The instant you have finished reading my letter you must order out Peter Lynch and the car, and drive over to Castle Daly, whatever other business you may happen to have in hand, and invite the brother and sister to come and stay with you in Good People's Hollow. If they hesitate, you and Peter must bring them off by force. When you have possession of them you must take them about in the car to all the wakes and fairs and stations you can hear of, till their faces and yours and Peter Lynch's have got so mixed up together in people's thoughts that they will never disconnect them again. Then you must write a

letter for me to show Lesbia, such as will set her heart at rest, saying how well you and Mr. Thornley are getting on together, and how everybody's ill-will has given way at the sight of your triple alliance. Be quick, dear Cousin Anne, and accomplish this, or I'll never believe you are a true descendant of the O'Flaherty witch. I shall expect that letter before another month is over, and the shortening of the days which Miss Thornley says she dreads so much has become perceptible."

CHAPTER X.

MISS O'FLAHERTY went about her usual occupation for the rest of that day and the next, carrying Ellen Daly's letter in her pocket, and bearing on her mind the conviction that a disagreeable duty, to which she must bring herself sooner or later, hung over her head. It was not any personal feeling against the Thornleys that made Ellen's request distasteful, it was rather that it brought her, as despotic rulers are liable to be brought, into unexpected collision with the limits of her power.

Sympathetic people with active minds and not very strong wills sometimes appear to have almost unbounded power over those with whom they are brought constantly in contact. Their busy brains and hearts quick to interpret the emotions of slower intellects seem to have an irresistible faculty for moulding the actions of others in accordance with their wishes; but it is a sort of influence that is very apt to fail suddenly. It only gathers up and gives form to the feelings and thoughts of others, it does not control them, and the link of sympathy once broken, the authority falls to the ground.

Miss O'Flaherty, Queen of Hearts, as she was reputed to be, had had one or two examples of her powerlessness to bring about what she desired, when it was *against* the prejudices of her neighbours she was working, and not *through* them, and she suspected that this matter of calling back the sanction she had been supposed to give to the popular hatred of the Thornleys would prove another humiliating instance of the failure of her influence.

She had no instinctive love of combat in her, but in this instance the duty was too imperative to be long put aside. She let two fine days slip by, but when the third came in, with drenching rain and howling west wind from the sea, her resolution woke up. It was easier to defy weather and Peter Lynch together than to take Peter Lynch alone, and from childhood Anne had always found a storm of wind inspiring, and taken delight in braving the weather; besides, she should be sure to find the Thornleys at home, and they hardly could turn her away from her cousin's door wet through. She gave her little maidens directions to prepare for visitors before she left home, and in spite of the blinding rain took the reins in her own hands to provide against Peter's circumventing her after all by overturning the car in the first convenient bog he came near.

She did not set forth till noon, and her progress was slow, the road being converted in many places to a shallow running stream, and the old horse knowing well in whose hands he was. It was already late in the afternoon when Castle Daly came in sight. The storm had spent its strength by that time, the loud wail of the wind had died away into little fitful gusts, like the worn-out sobs of a child spent with angry crying, the clouds had lifted in the west, showing below their black jagged ridges a blood-red sun sloping to its funeral pyre piled with purple and gold. The tossed waves of the lake caught the glow, and ran up to the shores in crimson curves as if the expanse of water had been suddenly turned into a sea of molten jewels. The trees and battered flowers in the garden seemed to be gathering themselves together and lifting up their tossed arms and wet faces for a farewell kiss of peace from the departing sun. It looked like an hour of reconciliation. The battle had been fought, and the contending powers, storm and sunshine, were stretching hands to each other across the battle-field. Anne felt it a good omen, and took heart for the task that lay before her.

The place was very still and deserted, no loungers by the gate, no beggars airing their rags on the wall, or gossoons hanging about the back premises waiting to be sent on errands. A dull, empty echo came back from the wide hall and staircase when Anne knocked. The maid that

answered her summons informed her that Mr. Thornley was out, and Miss Thornley at home, but very busy. Anne did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence, she glided past the girl, walked straight to the library door, and opened it for herself. She had planned during her drive exactly what she would do and say on her arrival. She meant to walk in with outstretched hands, take Miss Thornley's in hers, and speak out at once all that was in her mind without false shame or grudging. She would confess frankly her repentance for past misconstructions, and speak of the strong desire that had grown up in her mind to undo the wrongs of which she was guilty towards them. There should be no holding back; the barriers of dislike and misunderstanding should be thrown down by a flood tide of generous impulse and goodwill. Her purpose held good till the door was thrown open, and she had taken a step or two forward into the room, and then a sudden revulsion of feeling came. A quiet figure rose from behind a writing-table, heaped up with books and papers, and two grey eyes fixed on her face, plainly asked the meaning of her intrusion. A snowball aimed at Anne would hardly have sent a more sudden chill through her than the dignified surprise expressed by those eyes. The hearty words she had meditated died on her lips, and she gave up all intention of taking Miss Thornley's friendship by storm. There was an awkward pause which the English lady broke first, making a step forward, but not holding out her hand.

"I am afraid there is some mistake. You have no doubt come in to see my brother, Miss O'Flaherty, and I am sorry to say he is out. If I could be of any use—but—" (glancing expressively at her letters) "I am unfortunately very much occupied at this moment."

"Yes, I know, and I am sorry to intrude upon you," cried Anne, feeling that since she had lost courage to offer a favour, the only possible way of escaping from her dilemma was to beg one; "but I have had a long wet drive, and I am very tired. I think I must venture to ask you to let me sit with you an hour to rest."

Miss Thornley gave a despairing glance at her writing-table, then, with a resigned air, pushed it aside, brought forward an armchair for her visitor, and ringing the bell,

ordered coffee and a fire. While these were in the course of preparation, she sat upright on her seat, and made conversation on indifferent topics with all her might. If she had drawn a circle round herself with an enchanter's wand, she could not more effectually have erected a barrier against intimacy, which her guest was warned not to cross.

"I fear I am keeping you from finishing letters you are anxious about," Anne ventured to observe at last, noticing how, in the intervals of her little dry sentences, Miss Thornley's eye stole lovingly back to her writing-case.

"Not letters; I was copying out an essay of my brother's for the 'Quarterly Review,' which I had hoped to dispatch by to-day's post, as it is already due; but never mind, it is too late now; it can't be helped."

The tone was so much more interested than anything that had gone before, that Anne ventured to take up a MS. sheet and ask a few questions.

The essay proved to be a very laudatory review of a book on Ireland which Anne happened to have read, and particularly disliked. She could not refrain from stating some of her objections to the book in her usual eager way. Miss Thornley defended the author's opinions coldly at first; then with some force, turning to her brother's essay, and reading out bits of sarcasm with evident relish, which provoked angry eloquence from Anne. Argument, even when so vehement as almost to approach a quarrel, was a nearer step towards acquaintanceship for those two than mere company talk. Both parties forgot to whom they were speaking in the interest of the question, and put forth all their powers. Miss Thornley's eyes brightened, her white teeth gleamed now and then with a smile of triumph when she pounced upon a very obvious contradiction in Anne's statements, a little colour stole into her brown cheeks. Suddenly, in some far-off region of the house, a clock struck. Anne saw all the interest and excitement die out of the grey eyes instantly, and a new expression steal into them—a yearning anxious look that went to her heart. They talked on, Miss Thornley sitting more and more upright on her high-backed chair, and wandering further and further from the point of discussion in her replies to Anne's remarks. Her whole soul had

evidently gone out in striving to catch some distant sound. A quarter-of-an-hour—half-an-hour slipped by; silence fell upon the talkers; it was impossible to keep up the farce of conversation any longer.

Miss Thornley rose from her chair at last, and began to pace up and down before the windows, peering out into the darkness, first from one and then from the other; then, with a muttered excuse about the closeness of the room, raising a sash, and leaning her head out to listen. Was this her usual way of spending the twilight hours, Anne wondered. Her heart began to ache for her, as she observed how she kept nervously clasping and unclasping her fingers, as if every minute that passed made endurance more difficult; and what a great start she gave when another hour struck.

"You will have a dark drive home," Miss Thornley observed to Anne, when it could no longer be denied that evening had come, and that they were sitting in the dark.

"I don't care, Peter can always drive safely; you will let me stay a little longer, till your brother comes back?" Anne implored.

Miss Thornley put out her hand and grasped the back of a chair, as if to keep herself from falling.

"You—you know of some danger he is in; you came to warn me?"

"Oh, no, no," cried Anne; "do you think I could have sat still, talking all this time, if it had been so? Please don't imagine me so heartless."

A quick gesture from Miss Thornley, that seemed to say the question of Anne's heartlessness was one to which she could not give her mind just then, was all the answer that came.

"There!" she said faintly, a minute or two later, "did you hear that?"

It was a very distant sound, so distant and faint that Anne would not have troubled herself to think what it was if her attention had not been called to it; but as it was, there was no resisting the conviction—that sharp, clear ring—it was a gun going off somewhere, a few yards from the house. Anne could not keep her voice from trembling a little, as she answered—

"It was nothing; such sounds are often heard."

"No, not *such* sounds; I never heard anything exactly like that, at this hour before. Will John never come?"

She covered her face with her hands, and stood trembling, but self-controlled still. Anne thought she could almost hear the beating of her heart in the dead silence that followed, while both held their breath, listening for what would come next.

Cheerful sounds—a man's brisk step crushing the gravel, a voice giving some directions outside, in what Anne believed to be a purposely loud and reassuring tone of voice, then a common-place knock at the door.

Miss Thornley withdrew her hands from her face, into which colour and expression had rushed back.

"There!" she said, looking up at Anne, "I have been foolish again, and you have seen it. May I beg you not to tell my brother about my little fright; it was nothing, you see, and I would not have him know how nervous I am apt to get, when he is long away, for the world; it would make him needlessly uncomfortable."

Anne had only time for a gesture of compliance, for the brisk steps were approaching the library door, and Miss Thornley sprang forward to meet her brother.

"Well, John, are you very wet and tired?"

"Yes, wet through; but my pockets are well stuffed to make up for it. Three letters—one from Lesbia, and a better haul of books than I ever had before, from the Ballyowen book-shop. Actually, a 'Quarterly' only six months old; and a volume of Napier's 'Peninsular War.' Don't you call that worth riding in the rain for?"

The tones were light, but as the brother's and sister's eyes met there was an eager question in them that betrayed more feeling than comes into every-day meetings and partings.

"I have you safe at home again, and nothing has happened then?" the sister's eyes asked, while the brother's telegraphed back an affectionate remonstrance.

"Yes, you see I am safe. Why do you let yourself be anxious?"

The expression passed in a moment, as Mr. Thornley turned to address Anne; but it was not lost on her.

"I thought I heard a gun go off in the direction of the field beyond the larch grove, at the back of the house,"

Miss Thornley remarked in a studiously indifferent tone of voice some minutes after.

"Ah! yes, I daresay you did," her brother answered; "some stupid fellows popping at the rabbits, I suppose."

"Shooting rabbits in the dark! and close to the road?"

"Well, I jumped over the stone wall and looked about in the wood, thinking I should surprise whoever it was, but I saw no one."

"Jumped over the wall! Oh, John, how rash! You promised you would not run risks."

"The risk of being mistaken for a rabbit? I assure you, Bride, it was not a risk; it was the best thing to do."

The pair of grey eyes met again, and looked into each other; there was an agony of questioning now in the sister's. What did he mean? Had he just come out of great peril? Had he had a hair-breadth escape of his life a few minutes ago, and did he know it himself? Anne could not quite make up her mind what to think. Her eyes, too, were rivetted on Mr. Thornley's face, and she fancied there was a little trembling of the lip as if he were trying to keep down some emotion before he spoke again.

"I really think that the poaching theory may be the true one to-night," he said. "Let us be satisfied with it, and ask no more questions. We shall never have a moment's peace here if we try to account for everything that happens on reasonable suppositions. Now, if Miss O'Flaherty will excuse me, I will empty my pockets of books, and go and change my wet clothes."

It was clear that Anne could not delay her leave-taking longer. As she took Miss Thornley's hand to say "Good-bye," she managed to bring out the invitation that she intended to speak with her first greeting. It was negatived so decidedly by brother and sister in one breath, that she felt there was no possibility of urging it further. Her disappointment was less keen than it would have been an hour ago. The events of the evening had convinced her that the danger was too real and grave to be met by the measures Ellen had suggested. Another project had dawned on her mind. She was now in haste to return home, and spend the rest of the evening in taking the first step for carrying it into execution.

CHAPTER XI.

"The slow sweet hours that bring us all things good;
The slow sad hours that brings us all things ill
And all good things from evil."

TENNYSON.

THE library at Castle Daly, since the Thornley occupancy of the place, had taken a more habitable look than when Mr. Daly only used it to yawn away an hour in on a rainy day. The rest of the wide empty house echoed footsteps drearily, and looked dismal; but cheerful sociability and home comfort seemed to have taken up their abode among the heaped-up bookshelves and well-laden writing and work tables with which the brother and sister surrounded themselves.

When the front door had closed behind Miss O'Flaherty, Bride Thornley employed herself in putting the few ordering touches to the room, needed to bring it to the perfection of cosy-ness her brother loved to see in the evening. She gathered up the scattered leaves of the MS. she had been copying, and laid it ready for a last loving inspection; she arranged the books her brother was most likely to want, on his own particular table; she let down the heavy curtains over the windows, and wheeled two armchairs to their places opposite each other on the hearth-rug; then she sat down and stared at the fire. It was not often she let her thoughts fly back to old times, but to-night they flew back. She and her brother were in the habit of telling each other philosophically that to allow recollections of past sorrows and privations to rise up was a mere waste of mental strength, an infliction of purposeless pain; but to-night the painful images would arise, and she could not conjure them away. People thought her grave and reserved, and old-looking for her years; but had there been a time when she was young? She saw herself a pale, still child, gathering her younger brothers and sisters around her to hush their play and laughter, because she had discovered by her mother's swollen eyelids, and her father's knitted brow, that something had gone wrong with the elders of the house

and that the sound of mirth jarred on them. She saw herself a thin brown-faced girl without any of the charms of girlhood, thrusting from her all timidity, all yearning after her mother's love and care, that she might go forth and work among strangers. She heard over again the bitter tales of privation, of "carking cares" and shames which that young girl had to hear when she returned for short holidays to her home. She saw herself kneeling by her dying mother's bedside, straining to catch the last feeble injunctions that fell from her parched death-drawn lips—not concerning herself—hardly a farewell to herself. She had been held to be capable of struggling alone in the world for so long, that there was no need for anxiety about her; it was the younger, more loveable ones, that claimed even those last thoughts. A little rosy face—a golden head—lay nestled against the mother's cheek; towards that her dying eyes were turned. "Child, be mother to this child!" And then the tired soul had escaped from the worn-out body, and the burden under which the elder woman had sunk fell on the girl's shoulders. It had been heavy in the long years that had followed. Unbearable she told herself it would have been, but for the help that came, when she discovered that there was one among her young charges able to take part with her in carrying the load; one whose determination to work and struggle, and suffer, rather than sink, matched her own; one from whom a word of counsel could be obtained now and again; one who could be trusted, in small things and great, not to fail. Bride traced in thought the steps by which she and this young brother had changed positions towards each other, till, from his looking up to her, she had learned to rely and lean upon him. What a rest it had been! What a tower of strength he had proved to be, when the stress of the storm came! And when the worst was over—yes, perhaps there was a time when she had felt young, like other people, with energy to spare, and that strange bubbling up of eager thoughts and bright hopes in the heart that leads to purposeless talk, and pleasure in mere motion and life such as kittens and puppies seem to have. She had known it during that one year when she and John had kept house together in London before death had invaded the brother and sister band. A very straitened household it had been, and the struggle to

keep it together hard for the two young heads, but they had all been gay together. Bride thought she could not then have been such a very formal, cold, repulsive person as Miss O'Flaherty seemed to find her now. Perhaps in that far back time, when there had been younger sisters to care for her looks and sew bows on her dresses, and arrange her soft, silky brown hair in becoming fashion round her head, there might—if she had not always been too busy—if she had gone out into the world and made acquaintances as other girls did—there might have been a possibility of her having been loved—of her having had some story of her own, some insight into the great mystery that seemed to fill up so large a space in other people's lives. Strange thought to flash across her, now that youth and the possibility lay so far behind! Well, if no love of the usual kind had come in that one sunny strip of life, that one breathing space between crushing anxieties and heartrending bereavements, something else had come—something that Bride Thornley was well content should stand for her in the place of what is usually called love. It was then that she and John had found each other out. Heart and conscience had been proved before, but it was in that leisure that their close mental companionship had begun—then they had first tasted what keen pleasure interchange of thought between minds that stimulate and satisfy each other can give. What talks they used to have in their quiet evenings after days of hard work, when, from the dingy, London lodging-house parlour, their minds took bold flights into realms of speculation and fancy, which seemed their own by divine right, because they were most at home there. What lovely dream-pictures rose up; what sparkles of wit flashed out; how eloquent, how wise, and how brilliant they were for each other!

The first eagerness with which their studies were prosecuted might have faded somewhat, the talks grown less eloquent, with the discovery that mysteries are not to be solved by dint of discussion; but the old comradeship was as close and sweet as ever still, the salt of life to each.

Whatever John Thornley might be to other people, to his sister Bride he was the sunshine and glory, the very fountain of joy of her life. Could she bear ever to lose

him, or even to share possession of him with anyone else? Had not his grave face an extra attraction for her, because she thought that to no other eyes but her own would it ever look beautiful?

There did not appear to be any special reason for asking herself that question to-night, but it came and absorbed Bride so completely that she did not observe, as she might otherwise have done, that her brother was absent a long time from the room, or that when he did return, and came and stood by the fire, there was an expression of suppressed excitement on his face, which it had not worn half-an-hour before. It was he who broke the silence at last.

"Bride, I have something to tell you."

She looked up with a start and an exclamation of dismay. "Ah, I knew there was something—that gun!—Go on, I'm ready."

"No, no. Put such fancies quite out of your head. I have told you really all I know of that matter. This is something far more important. It concerns ourselves entirely."

"Good, or bad?"

"I don't quite know which you will think it."

"Bad, then, if it means change; we have had a fairly happy time lately, and, according to past experience, trouble is due. What quarter can it come from? White-cliff Bay and Babette, I guess. She has quarrelled with Mrs. Maynard, or perhaps in a fit of desperation over the eternal stocking-darning she has rushed into some silly flirtation, or engaged herself imprudently, and they want you to interfere."

"Quite wrong; what could make you think of such a thing? It's odd how even the sensiblest woman's thoughts always fly off to love-making."

"Indeed, John, it was not quite a vague guess; if you had read Babette's late letters as attentively as I read them, you would have noticed the hints that gave my thoughts that impulse."

"Hints as to growing weariness of stocking-darning or dawning love,—which?"

"I think I detect a combination of both states of feeling."

"Hum; we may have to inquire into that by and bye; but the news of to-night, which I have just read in one of those letters I brought in my pocket from Ballyowen, concerns a very different matter from marriages or giving in marriage. Bride, our grand-uncle, John Maynard, is dead."

"Dead! Well, I suppose he was a great age; where did he die? Had he any friend near him?"

"I don't know about a friend. His lawyer James Clarke was with him. The old man sent for him to Florence when he was taken ill, and he stayed till after the funeral. It is he who writes to me about the will."

"Well, well, John, you know what I want to ask. How is it after all? Has he died rich or poor? Has he divided his money fairly among all his dutiful, expectant relations excepting our twoselves, or has he left it all to a hospital?"

"He has left a very large fortune indeed; much larger than anyone expected I fancy, and he has not divided it. With the exception of a few small legacies, it all goes to one person."

"And the lawyer has written about it to you—to you, John?" A vivid colour flashed into Bride's face; she rose from her chair and held out her hands to her brother. He crossed the hearth and took both in a firm clasp.

"No, Bride, that thought must go out of your head at once. I am not the heir. It concerns us nearly though."

"Then it is Lesbia."

"Yes, it is little Lesbia. Old John Maynard has left the bulk of his great fortune to her—the child—our child is a great heiress now; that's the news that has come to-night."

"I can't take it in—baby—our poor little Babette."

"Rich little Babette, you mean. She need never break her heart over a stocking-basket again; as to the incipient love-making, that will have to be looked after perhaps."

"How will she feel about it when she hears—Babette a great heiress! I always thought the old man would reward us for sending her away by remembering her in his will, but that he should pass over so many other relations equally near and single her out to inherit all his fortune is different from what I expected."

"Our mother was his favourite niece till she married. I fancy he always secretly intended to make her children his heirs, and as we cut ourselves off, there was only *Lesbia*."

"How I should like to be near her and see her face, when she is told. It is seven years since we have seen her. Oh, John, does not this, at all events, end her banishment? Shall we not have her with us now?"

"Of course. This will please you. You and I are left sole guardians. A proof that, however angry the old man professed to be, he respected our conduct at the bottom. He has left us each a legacy of four thousand pounds, and we are to have four hundred a year for looking after the young lady and her property till she marries."

"A salary for taking care of our own little sister, whom we have provided for since she was five years old! Can we bear that, John?"

"I suppose it soothed the old man at the last to do us so much of justice without altogether revoking his threat. We must take it as he intended it."

"But how about the other relations—the Joseph Maynards?"

"They have a legacy equal to ours."

"And the bulk of the old man's rich hoards goes to *Lesbia*! How strange it will be to the Joseph Maynards to see her set up on such a pinnacle of prosperity—the little cinder-girl of their house this seven years. I am afraid they will be very angry."

"They won't like it; but they have no more right to grumble than you or I, except that they have been kept longer in suspense. Old John made all his money himself, and had a right to do what he pleased with it."

"If it had pleased him to spend some of it in helping us when we needed help sorely, what grateful hearts he might have had round his death-bed!"

"Let that thought rest now he has gone."

"It shall. I don't suppose, though, that Mrs. Joseph Maynard will be as silent over the wrongs of her precious boys. *Lesbia* will not have much comfort after the news of her fortune reaches Whitecliff."

"We will send for her as soon as possible."

"How strange it will be to have her again, a girl of

seventeen and an heiress, instead of the little clinging thing I used to dress, and coddle and teach, and work my fingers to the bone for! I hope she is not much changed. John, do you remember the night we resolved to separate ourselves from her seven years ago? how my heart ached!"

"Yes, it troubled you more to part from Lesbia than to give up your chance of inheriting the great Maynard fortune."

"We elder ones had no choice. We could not promise to disown our father, or not to go back to him if he wanted us, and we could not foresee he never would. I think we had only two or three letters from him during the next six months, and then we heard of his death in Canada. The decision could not be recalled then."

"Why, you have never wished to recall it; have you?"

"Not till to-night; to-night I think it does give me pain to remember that, if things had fallen out ever so little differently, this great fortune would have come to you."

"The 'falling out' would have had to be very different for this money to come to you or me as we are now. Think what mean reptiles we should have grown into by this time if we had been depending on that despotic old man all these years. Lesbia has, at all events, got the fortune without having had to serve an apprenticeship of servility to earn it."

"Yes, but if the thought that made my heart beat so quickly just now had proved a correct guess: if he had, as I hoped just then, relented and done you full justice at the last."

"It would have been a bad precedent. It's best to know that, if one makes a choice, one must expect to abide by it, and that one can't turn one's back on an object and reach it by walking the opposite way."

"You would have been in your right place."

"Perhaps; but don't be covetous, madam. I believe that if I had had the money I should have done something with it you would not have greatly approved."

"I can't imagine not approving of what you did."

"I should have bought this house and estate of Mr. Daly—he'll have to sell it sooner or later—and settled down into an Irish landlord."

"To be shot dead from behind a stone wall three months after. I would not have let you."

"Yes, you would; you as well as I have a spice of the obstinate temper that helped old Uncle John to make his fortune. You don't like any more than I to be baffled in an undertaking you have once put your hands to."

"You have cured me of ever grudging Lesbia her fortune again. As it is, we can hardly keep her here. You will have to give up the agency. Did not you say we had each four thousand pounds? Why that is enormous riches. It sets you free at last to devote your whole time to study and such literary work as you really care for."

"Time will settle all that. What we have to do at once is to write to Babette and the Joseph Maynards. I should like the child to receive the news from us first; if it comes to her through Mrs. Joseph it will be spiced with bitter comments."

"The little thing has not had a brilliantly happy home with our good cousins, I fear. She has been very good to complain so little; and now to think of having her again for our own. She must have grown up very pretty. Do you remember the dimples in her cheeks, John, and her beautiful big brown eyes?"

"I suppose she was a pretty child, but I don't think I liked her eyes as well as I like some other eyes in the family; yours, for example, Bride, always seem to me to have a great deal more in them."

"Mine?" A personal compliment was such a strange thing to Bride Thornley, that coming even from her brother, it brought a vivid blush to her face. "My pale grey things! You don't know what you are talking about, John; you have no appreciation for beauty."

"Yes, I have, but it does not oblige me to like sparkling glass beads stuck in a face. I know quite well what I do admire."

"Do you, really?"

"Yes, that I do, really."

"You are laughing, John."

"At the terror I have put you into with that word. In one instant of time you conjured up the notion that I was preparing to tell you of some long-concealed attachment,

by way of winding up the surprises of the evening. Did not I say truly that your feminine thoughts were always flying off to match-making?"

"It is wise of me to keep myself prepared. It must come some time, and if I never think of it I shall not be ready."

"I don't see what preparation you would need for such a communication if I were ever in a condition to make it."

"Of course you don't, you matter-of-factest man."

"Don't you profess also to be a matter-of-factest woman?"

"Yes, but the gulf there is between man and woman in such a matter as this!"

"The gulf is created simply by your womanly unreasonableness in supposing that the new feeling, if it ever does come, must necessarily be so absorbing as to blot out old ones. It would not with me. Make yourself easy on that score, Bride; I cannot imagine such a thing of myself. If I ever do fall in love, I shall look out for having the same calm, satisfying, equal-minded comradeship with my wife that you and I have had together. I have thought it well over, and that is my highest ideal of human attachment. And that is what I mean to go in for."

"No, you won't. I am not at all pleased to hear you say so. I think it a very bad sign that you have formed the plan."

"I have formed no plan; it is you who are planning. I think we do very well as we are, and that nothing can be more uncalled for than your drilling yourself to expect changes. It would be ridiculous for you and me to talk sentiment to each other; but if you are in no haste to dissolve our old partnership, I am not—it satisfies me."

"John, that is as good as a fortune to me; I am richer now than Babette."

Their manners were habitually so reserved, and it was so seldom that personal feelings were discussed between them, that Bride felt those few words a possession to be laid by in her memory and often looked at, especially when after a moment's grave silence her brother stooped down and put his lips to her forehead. It seemed to her to be a seal on the old bond of fellowship, given on this day when new conditions were about to enter into their lives.

"Now let us have tea, and write the letters that are to transform Cinderella into the Princess," said John.

"They will only invest her with her silk robes and her chariot and glass slippers," Bride answered. "The Prince is another question, and for my part I hope he will be a long time in coming."

"We must not however take measures to keep him away, or we shall lay ourselves open to the imputation of manœuvring to keep our own four hundred a year."

"As if anyone in their senses would suspect you of interested motives."

"Heiress-hunters will be very apt to do so if I interfere with their game, I suspect. The child will be a more anxious charge for the future, than when——"

"You lifted her sobbing from the bed where our mother lay dead, John. It shall be very tender care we take, shall it not, of herself, not of her fortune, with as little thwarting as may be of any true feeling that comes? I should not like hers to be a colourless life."

"A colourless life is not by any means the worst fate that can befall a woman. We have witnessed one far more cruel, and our earnest care must be that Lesbia's life shall in no degree repeat that. Our poor mother was an expectant heiress in her youth, you remember; and I heard her say that she owed all her unhappiness to her having had the prospect of these same Maynard hoards hanging so long over her head. Our father would have been a different man but for the thought of them."

"Yes, yes, I know. But we will be the wisest providences over Lesbia. She shall not have a chance of making a mistake in her marriage; but don't let us attempt to forecast her future till our letters are written, or I am certain we shall not make them encouraging enough. I want the news to come to her sweet and bright."

The spirits of the two guardians rose as they wrote, and Bride was so well satisfied with the letters she sealed and directed at the close of the evening that for the first time since her residence at Castle Daly she ran down to the lodge-gate with the letter-bag to deposit the precious budget in the postman's hands herself, and to administer a not unnecessary admonition to him to make a point of reaching Ballyowen that morning in time to catch the

mail. The man of course pulled up his horse to enter into a long and vociferous defence of his own punctuality, and in the vehemence of his gesticulations threw down a bag, which being imperfectly fastened, emptied its contents on to the road. Bride stooped to gather up the letters, and as she returned them to their place could not help seeing that the direction of one was to the same little seaside town in England for which her own letters were destined. She crossed her arms on the upper bar of the gate when at last the carman had been prevailed on to start again, and watched him drive up the steep white road whipping and shouting to his horses with a great display of energy, while the children from the mud cabins on the mountain-side rushed down, and threw themselves full in his way, whooping and huzzaing and waving ragged caps and sticks, till Bride thought it a wonder that car, horse, driver, and letter-bags were not precipitated over the rocky ledge into the dancing waters below. She stayed looking up the road till the car had rounded the summit of the hill, and the last, urchin crept back to his mud retreat, her thoughts following the queer-looking messenger who was bearing on the first stage of its journey the news that was to make such a revolution in one little life. She wished she could somehow conjure herself within the folds of her letter and creep out when it reached its destination at last at the other side of the kingdom, to add some words tenderer and graver yet than any that had come to her the evening before. Her head bowed itself at last on her clasped hands, and purple mountains and shimmering lake, and shouting children passed out of her vision as her heart rose in yearning prayer to Him whose felt presence with all annihilates distance, giving into His hands the task of delivering from unsafe elation the eager little heart that had to learn that the new strange temptation of a "time of wealth" was coming upon her.

Anne O'Flaherty's thoughts took flight in the same direction many times that day. The letter whose direction Bride had read was hers. She had written it off impulsively on her arrival home the night before, and not allowed herself to re-read it in the morning. It was full of the impression her visit to the Thornleys had made on her. Not mitigating anything of her fears, or scrupling to

urge strongly on Mr. Daly the motive for a speedy return to Ireland, which she knew would be most powerful with him, the duty of not allowing another man to run risks for his sake which he was not sharing.

She was anxious and unsettled all the day after her letter went. She did not exactly regret having written it, but the cooler judgment of the morning showed her it was an important step she had taken, and that the reading of her letter would certainly make a change in the lives of those she most cared for. Would they have cause to thank or reproach her for it by and bye? Would Mrs. Daly ever forgive her for bringing her husband back to Ireland just then?

There was however no use in questioning or regretting. Bearers of good news and bad had passed out of their writers' control now, and through the bright sunshine and the dark night, and the dawn of another day, were speeding over the sea, by quiet country roads, through noisy towns and pleasant English villages, to meet the eyes and hands that would never afterwards forget the feeling of those particular sheets of paper between their fingers, the position and shape of the words on which their startled glances fell.

CHAPTER XII.

My purse holds no red gold, no coin of the silver white ;
No herds are mine to drive through the long twilight ;
But the pretty girl that would take me, all bare though I be and lone,
Oh ! I'd take her with me kindly to the county Tyrone.

Irish Ballad.

A SHARP shower was falling, turning the badly-paved streets of the little seaside village of Whitecliff into a succession of gutters and puddles, and driving the early promenaders and the troops of children, mammas, and nursemaids on their way to their morning bath in the sea, to beat hasty retreats into the green verandahed houses that stretched in irregular rows along the cliff. In ten minutes the busy little place looked deserted, and discontented loungers at the windows had nothing to regale their eyes upon but the rain-drops splashing in the gutters and the occasional advent of a dripping umbrella, or a woman

with a basket of shrimps on her head. Pelham Daly had been standing for nearly three-quarters of an hour in the window of one of these houses, lazily swinging the tassel of the window-blind backwards and forwards, and contemplating that pleasant prospect in no very contented frame of mind. Ellen had accused him playfully of being always out of humour when it rained, and Connor had made a calculation of how many sulky days he might reckon on having in a year, if he spent his life at Castle Daly, and he had not taken their remarks in very good part. He thought within himself that he had very special reasons for being disgusted at the turn the weather had taken in this last week of his College vacation, but he could not make out a very satisfactory account of these reasons to his own mind in the course of his meditations at the window. Of course it was of no consequence whatever to him, whether that picnic to the pirate's cave, planned with the Maynards, came off while he was at Whitecliff or after he had left. He had only consented to join it out of good-nature, and that there might be some one of the party capable of taking reasonable care of Ellen; and yet—and yet—"Yes, certainly," he thought, "it was towards him, and not towards Connor, that a certain pair of brown eyes had glanced when, on parting for the night at the Maynards' garden gate, the words 'We shall meet to-morrow' had been spoken softly. The swinging tassel, the square window-frame, the dripping pavement vanished altogether from Pelham's vision for a few minutes while the momentous question of the exact direction of that glance occupied his thoughts—in their place came a little pink and brown face set in smooth bands of soft dusky hair, and two bright eyes, flashing quick glances, whose meaning required a good deal of afterthought. Not that he cared or was ever likely to care seriously what the glances meant, only it was tantalizing never fairly to know whether one was looked at or not. All at once, in a second, his eyes recovered the power of seeing what was before them—the dream-picture faded and reality came in its place, vividly, startlingly, sending quick pulses through all his veins as he gazed. The back-door of a house just opposite, but divided from the street by a narrow strip of garden, opened, and a child of four trotted forth into the

rain. The slim figure of a girl dashed out after him and caught him by the skirts to drag him in. Floating pink flounces, a white handkerchief thrown over a dark head, little feet in thin slippers showing on the wet step, slender hands stretched out,—that was the spectacle Pelham's eyes fastened upon and recognized in a moment. A small contest followed. The little child struggled hard to escape from the arms that captured him. A sturdy hand directed a blow at the pink cheek, shaded by the handkerchief. Pelham clutched the window-frame with a wild purpose of flinging himself out, across the dividing space on to the scene of action. Then all was over; the figures retreated as suddenly as they had appeared, and no evidence of the incident remained but the deep glow that had burned itself into Pelham's face, and the quick beating of his heart that had been so quiet a minute before.

It was no concern of his, certainly, he said to himself; he was going away to-morrow and should never see any of these people again; but if any excuse for thrashing every one of those cubs of Maynards could be afforded him before he took his departure, he should leave the place with an easier mind. How could Ellen and Connor witness such a state of things as indifferently as they did? How could they laugh gaily over the incongruities of their friend's surroundings, and see only subjects for amusement in the little indignities which made him, who had no pretence to her friendship, indignant and heartsore? He recalled warm words and beaming looks bestowed one hour, which did not preclude little jokes at pretty Lesbia's expense the next, and he said to himself that such hypocrisy made him sick. Poor bright-eyed, ill-used, trusting Lesbia! whom he was leaving to-morrow to the mercies of exacting relations and half-hearted friends. *He* leaving! What was he thinking of? As if he had anything to do with her, or she would ever even know that there was one person in the world who resented her wrongs as they deserved to be resented!

"There!" cried Connor, looking up from the desk where he had been writing diligently for the last quarter of an hour, "I have done it, Ellen, and not so badly either, I will say that for myself. I doubt whether there are many fellows, this side the Channel at all events, who could

have turned off a 'nate' little copy of verses, as sweet as sugar, by Jove—in the time, exactly twelve minutes and a half by the clock."

The silence, which had actually lasted nearly half an hour, here came to an end, and the clack of tongues that hardly ever ceased in Ellen's and Connor's waking hours when they were together, began again.

"Verses, Connor? I thought you said you were going to read mathematics soberly this rainy morning?"

"What can a poor fellow do, when a young lady with the cunningest eyes in the world comes round him by moonlight, saying how 'mavourneen' is the prettiest word ever spoken, and would not it go well in a song? How can he help himself writing a song about her the first thing in the morning?"

"Oh Connor, Connor, it was you who began with your 'mavourneens'—I heard you. But let us see what you have written."

"Yes, yes; read it aloud. I flatter myself that there's a touch of the real thing in the verses, and that they'll turn off your tongue like music. Try them."

"Mavourneen is a priceless gem,
Jewelled her robe from throat to hem,
She's crowned with a rare diadem,
Mavourneen.

"Her throne is pure gold, but not fit
For one so strangely fair, to sit
Upon, and yet she honours it—
Mavourneen.

"Slaves every moment throng her feet,
With eager eyes upraised to meet
Each least desire of hers, most sweet
Mavourneen.

"But, oh, she wears the plainest gown,
Her dear head never crowned a crown,
Only my heart makes her renown—
Mavourneen.

"And her gold throne I spoke about,
Is only built of love without
Any possible flaw throughout—
Mavourneen.

"My thoughts are born in chains, they move
All round and round her in one groove,
Living to wait on her I love—
Mavourneen."

"But it's an out-and-out love song," cried Ellen, when she had finished reading.

"And what else would it be? What else is worth putting into music and giving her to read but just love?"

"I don't know what Lesbia will think of it though—this line about the poorest gown—it's very pretty, but will she like it?"

"I can't take it out; it's just that gives the touch of pathos and makes the verses above the common. It's the one grain of real poetry in the whole thing, for it came warm and true out of my heart. I was thinking of her as she looked last night, when that little rascal, Bob Maynard, threw a handful of wet sand over her dress. She stood still, looking at the stains, with her red lip up, and the big tears swelling in her jewels of eyes—the poor little darling of the world, that she is! Mavourneen!"

"Oh Connor, Connor, I do believe you will talk yourself into being actually in love with her at last, and you know in reality it's all make-believe and talk—words, words, words."

"I know nothing of the kind; how can you judge? Every man meets his fate some time."

"Man! But you are a boy."

"And Babette is a baby; so we are well matched. Come, give me an envelope. I don't say that I have quite the brass to give her these verses into her own hands. I'll send them anonymously by post, and she can make out whom they come from if she pleases."

"You won't, really?"

"Who's to hinder me?"

"I will. I won't allow any such nonsense to go out of the house. I won't have you make such a fool of yourself," cried Pelham, turning from the window with a very red, indignant face, which during all the previous conversation he had been trying to bring into sufficient order to expose to Connor's quizzing eyes.

"Hollo! Don Pomposo Furioso! we had forgotten you were in the room," cried Connor. "You would not have had the luck to hear my verses, I can tell you, if I had remembered your existence five minutes ago; but, since you have heard, what objection does your wisdom find to them?"

"Give the letter to me ; it shan't go. As I said before, I won't let you make a confounded fool of yourself, and insult Miss Maynard."

"Insult Miss Maynard ! That's a good joke, when she asked me to write the verses herself, and is expecting them this minute—the darling !"

"Ellen, you can let him speak in that way of your friend ?"

"My dear Pelham, I don't see anything to be so very angry about. Connor drew her on certainly, but Lesbia did drop a hint about wishing to have some verses written on purpose for herself—I heard it."

"Well, I have often been told that women are envious of each other, and speak ill of their dearest friends behind their backs, and now I believe it."

"Easy, Pelham, easy. Abuse me as much as you like, and welcome—I'll take it kindly ; but don't fall foul on Ellen, if you please. The notion of her needing to be envious and jealous of little Lesbia Maynard beats everything for absurdity."

"You say that, and you write verses about gold thrones and chains. What a confounded humbug you are !"

Connor laughed aloud. "Well, no one will accuse you of being that same. You've as fine a talent for insulting your relations and friends as the biggest hypocrite in the world would need to prove his sincerity by."

"I did not insult you—nothing of the kind ; but I'm in earnest that those verses don't go to Miss Maynard."

"Oh, I can be in earnest too, if you like ; but just look here, Pelham ! We are not schoolboys now to quarrel conveniently, and we found out once before that it did not answer for us two to interfere with each other. We made a mess of it when it was only a question of a dog between us, and a young lady is a much more awkward subject to disagree about."

"And indeed, Pelham, you are taking it a great deal too seriously," put in Ellen, eagerly. "Don't you know that Connor is always writing verses to young ladies, and never sending them ? Why he has written poems on every one of the seven Miss O'Roones of Ballyowen ; and as to the Dublin young ladies of his acquaintance, you should see what he finds to say and sing about them."

"No, he shall not see," cried Connor, taking up his writing-case, and deliberately placing the sheet from which Ellen had read in an inside pocket already well stuffed with MSS. "It's like shaking a red rag before a mad bull's eyes to show a scrap of poetry to Pelham. Let him subside, poor fellow; we've poked him up enough for one day, and he begins to look dangerous. Hullo! there's the postman coming up the street. I shall run down and intercept my share of his budget. I always hate letters except on a rainy day, and then there's some use in them. If I find a *billet-doux* from the youngest Miss O'Roone, Pelham shan't read it."

Pelham followed Connor out of the room, and was seen by Ellen a few minutes later setting forth to work off his discontent by a solitary walk in the rain. As soon as he was fairly out of sight, Connor's figure dashed across the road in the direction of the Maynards' house, closely following in the wake of the postman. Ellen, left alone, returned with a sigh to her work of spreading delicate fronds of seaweed on wet paper to send to cousin Anne, as an addition to the Happy-go-Lucky Lodge collection of works of art. As her needle laboriously separated and arranged the minute pink and white fibres, her thoughts made rapid excursions from one subject to another. If only the boys would not quarrel; if only she could once more see cousin Anne, and help her to arrange her heterogeneous possessions; if only she could learn the secret art by which Lesbia kept the boys so pleasantly engrossed that in her presence such jars as had occurred this morning seldom fell out. She laughed over the foolish squabbles with Connor, but they always left a little sting, a pin-prick wound, in her heart, that made her uneasy and remorseful for days after; and though no amount of coaxing would have won such an avowal from Connor, she knew quite well that it was the same with him. It was as necessary for him as for herself to bask in the good-will and approbation of those he lived among, and she knew by many little signs that nothing ever elated Connor more, or made him more comfortable with himself, than when some rare chance brought an unusual mark of confidence, or a word that could be twisted into approval from Pelham, his way.

And Pelham, too, why did he wince so under Connor's little sarcasm and her own careless speeches, and brood over them so long, if he did not, at the bottom of his heart, care more for Connor's good opinion and hers than he ever chose to show? Surely she must be a very bad manager, a very inefficient sister, not to have brought about greater harmony between these two, and made them understand each other better before this. How the rain pattered down, and how still the house was within! Soon Ellen heard her father open the dining-room door, and take in the letters which Connor had left on the hall-table, and shut himself in to read them; five minutes after, the door of the lower room opened hurriedly and her father's voice was heard calling her mother to come downstairs. It was not a usual thing for Mrs. Daly to leave her bedroom in the morning. How feeble her step on the stair was now, how slowly and reluctantly she seemed to move! Ellen half rose to help her, and then sat down again. If her father had any unpleasant business to discuss with her mother, as was only too likely, it was better that they should talk it out first alone, and she must hold herself ready to comfort each separately afterwards. In dilemmas her father was apt to turn to her for counsel instead of to Pelham, and that displeased her mother. There was something in the aspect of this day that reminded Ellen of another day at home, a day that had brought trouble and change. Was it the patter of the rain? Strong, heavy rain, that would not have disgraced the West land, where everything seemed to be done more thoroughly and heartily than here. Ellen shut her eyes and tried to conjure herself back in thought to Castle Daly, and to believe for a moment or two that when she looked up she should find herself surrounded by old familiar things. The touch of a wet cheek put close to hers roused her, and she opened her eyes quickly to the sight of Connor leaning over the back of her chair, with laughter in his eyes, and bright raindrops trickling from his drenched hair down upon her face.

"What are you thinking of?" he began. "Have you not been cracking your sides with laughter over the fine disclosure we have had this morning?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don Pomposo in love."

"Oh, nonsense. Why did you go out into the rain and get yourself so wet?"

"What a question for a Connemara girl! To post my love-letter, of course."

"Oh, Connor, have you really?"

"And indeed I have. The joke is, that I had to take one of Pelham's envelopes, with his initials on the flap. I dashed into his room, seized from his desk the first that came to hand, directed it to Miss Lesbia, and rushed out after the postman to drop it into the Maynards' box with their other letters. I only noticed the big P.D. above the seal after it had slipped through my fingers. But it's an excellent joke."

"It is not fair: she will think Pelham wrote the verses."

"Will she? Won't her heart tell her better than that, don't you think?"

"Connor, I do believe you are very conceited."

"You'll have to believe her very stupid if she is to give Pelham the credit for writing what she's reading this minute. I wish I could see her eyes, the darling jewels that they are, eating up the words. Won't she know who wrote them! Pelham write such verses as those to her, indeed!"

"Perhaps she would prefer to think they were Pelham's. She has seen almost as much of him as of you; and he is very handsome, you must allow."

"So is that old gold fish in the vase there, but who ever succeeded in getting up a tender interest in the dumb beauty? It looks well in a room, but nobody flings a thought to it. It's the blarney that wins the hearts, all the world over."

"It's a shame that it should when it is such thorough-going blarney as yours, Connor dear. I don't think you should have sent those verses to Lesbia. She does not know you as well as I, and perhaps she'll believe all that farrago you wrote about your love being a gold throne for her to sit upon for ever, and your thoughts her slaves following her in chains. Oh, Connor, Connor, when I know what erratic creatures they are—it makes me laugh, but she might possibly take it seriously."

"And it's heaven's truth she'll be taking in if she does.

I don't know 'why you won't believe me, Ellen, for I've been saying the same thing to you for the last six weeks without a breath of change. A man may be in love, and keep a little fun and life in him. He need not look black death and thunder at all the world like Pelham, I should hope; and I have loved that little darling in the red house yonder ever since the day when she made me savage by laughing at me."

"Six weeks ago," put in Ellen.

"And why won't I love her for ever? I don't care if all the world knows of it."

"But I advise you not to let Mrs. Joseph Maynard know of it, or there'll be no peace for poor little Lesbia. Pelham too——"

"Hang Pelham! What right has he to put in his oar? He took against her at first. He sha'n't cut in now, and spoil everything—I won't have it."

"He leaves us to-morrow, Connor dear. Don't say a word to vex him again. Don't let him know that you have really sent that letter, or for any sake breathe a word of its being put in one of his envelopes. We shall both be sorry to-morrow if we vex him again to-day."

"You never vex anyone—you are a regular little saint. It was Pelham's taking it upon himself to find fault with you, that bothered me, more than his interference about Lesbia. I can stand anything from him better than his bullying you."

"He does not intend to bully—it's his English way; and, Connor avourneen, what I want from you, is just a promise to take no notice however sulky he is the rest of this day, but to help me to coax him round. If blarney is good for anything, it is to keep peace at home, among brothers and sisters, don't you think? There is papa's voice calling me. Connor, I'm sure that some important news has come in those letters you took in. I have had a strange unsettled feeling on me all day, as if something was coming. Suppose only it should be news that took us home."

"Put in a word for Lesbia Maynard's going with us then, or I had rather stay where we are."

CHAPTER XIII.

"But the youngest sister had to sit at home and darn stockings."
Cinderella.

"ONE letter for mamma, and four for papa—and, hollo ! two for Babette. I say, Miss Babette sha'n't have her letters this minute though. I'll pay her out for dragging me in from the garden, by keeping them in my pocket till after dinner." Muttering thus to himself, little Walter Maynard, who had constituted himself supplementary letter-deliverer to the family, slipped two of the letters he had abstracted from the letter-box into his knickerbocker pockets and trotted into the parlour with the rest of his budget. Dr. Maynard was out on his morning round of visits among his patients. Mrs. Maynard inspected the outsides of his letters and read her own, while Lesbia looked up wistfully towards the little letter-carrier, from the copy-book, along which she was guiding Bobby Maynard's red stumpy fingers in their first efforts to make pot-hooks and hangers ; and sighed. She had not had a letter for a whole week. It was too bad of Bride, and the ready April tears swelled in her eyes, till one large bright drop overflowed and fell.

"There, Baby, it was you made me make that great blot. Yes, it was," cried Bob, twisting his head round, so as to see her face. "Why, you are crying ! Mamma, here's cousin Babette crying again. Isn't she a baby ?"

Thus appealed to, Mrs. Maynard looked up from her letter ; her face had rather a startled expression upon it, and the children thought her voice and her words, too, sounded odd.

"You are a very naughty boy, I am sure, Bobby, if you have made your cousin Lesbia cry, when she is so kind as to give you a writing-lesson. You may get down now and let Walter come and write."

"It was not Bobby's fault," said Lesbia, twinkling away her tears, and brightening instantly into smiles and dimples under the unexpected ray of kindness ; "but, oh, dear Aunt, need Walter write to-day ? My fingers are so hot and tired with holding Bobby's, and I'll give Walter some other kind of lesson by and bye to make up."

She strolled off to the window without waiting for an answer, clasping her tired hands behind her head. Mrs. Maynard's eyes rested on her for a minute or two, considering, and then turned back to re-peruse a sentence in her letter.

"We have all here been much excited by a report that has reached us of the death, at Florence, of Dr. Maynard's uncle—that rich old Mr. Maynard you told me about. They say he has left an immense fortune behind him, two hundred thousand pounds at the least, and that it is all to go to one of his great-nephews or nieces; we are hoping that the lucky heir is one of your fine boys. Let us know soon."

Mrs. Maynard's fingers strayed to the letters on the chimney-piece; the news must be in one of them. What a provoking thing it was that Dr. Maynard should have gone out that morning on one of his longest rounds, and that he should so often have declared his determination to keep his letters to himself, that even with such a question as this hanging over her, his wife dare not meddle with them. An immense fortune for one of her boys—for darling Johnny, the old man's godson. Surely Providence could not have allowed anything else to happen. The anxious mother's thoughts flew back to question every incident of the last occasion, when old John Maynard had come down to Whitecliffe expressly to spend an evening at their house. Which of the children had he noticed most?—Those tiresome ever-ready tears and smiles of Lesbia's! She was an awkward girl of thirteen then, not so very pretty, and old John had hardly looked at her till, just as he was taking leave, he poked his hand under her chin, and asked her abruptly if she was sorry to be separated from her brother and sister; then those provoking bright large tears had come into her babyish brown eyes, and the old man had turned away, and had a violent fit of coughing. Perhaps he hated tears. It was fortunate that he had not seen Lesbia within the last year or two, for certainly she was an alarmingly pretty girl now—an anxious charge for anyone. Good gracious! suppose for an instant the two hundred thousand pounds should go to her, what could be done then? Johnny, the eldest of their family, was only fourteen—three years younger than Lesbia

—and those two had never been friends. Only last Christmas holidays he had locked her up in the dark closet at the head of the stairs, and she had remained in the cold, forgotten by everyone, till Dr. Maynard asked for her at tea-time, and went to let her out. Yet they had all been extremely kind to her; she herself, at all events, could answer for having spent, strictly for Lesbia's benefit, very nearly all the money sent by the elder brother and sister, deducting only quite small sums to remunerate herself for all the trouble and care she had been put to. There could not be much to complain of in management under which she had grown up—the fresh, bright-eyed, pink-cheeked creature that stood idling in the window there, so different from the plain older sister. Again Mrs. Maynard's eyes fixed themselves on Lesbia, and as she took a more curious inventory of her charms than she had ever troubled herself to make before, she came to the conclusion, that if by perverse fate Lesbia did prove to be the heiress of the fortune that ought to come to her son, it would become her all her life to be extremely grateful to the disinterested cousins who had brought her up, and to acknowledge that she owed it somehow to them that her dark hair was so abundant, and of such a rich colour, that her figure was so slim and graceful, and that such a rich peach-bloom glowed under the clear brown of her cheeks. Had not all these endowments come to her under their roof?

Dr. Maynard did not return home at his usual hour, and in consequence the early dinner was one of the scenes of riot and squabble among the boys, and ineffectual scolding from Mrs. Maynard, that were a perpetual jar on little Lesbia's natural love of order and refinement. Her thoughts were busy during the meal, planning some legitimate method of securing a quiet afternoon for herself.

"You look very tired, Aunt" (she called Mrs. Maynard aunt, though she was in reality only her cousin by marriage). "You look tired, and I am sure your head is aching," she said, after dinner was over. "Let me do the week's mending for you this afternoon. I will take the stocking-basket into the old conservatory, where I shall have no interruption, and I will get all done by tea-time, and you can lie down and rest."

Mrs. Maynard hesitated a minute. All dinner-time she had been looking at Lesbia in the light of a possible great heiress, and the habit she had fallen into of using her as a household drudge did not look so just and natural as it had seemed any time these last seven years. On the other hand, was it not a true kindness to the girl, if this temptation of great wealth were really coming, to let her do one more afternoon's useful work? She should not be the worse for it, if things turned out as they ought to do, and Johnny's advancement lay in one of those thick letters on the chimney-piece. Mrs. Maynard made up her mind to be very generous, in that case, to Lesbia, and make her a present of the cornelian brooch she had seen her look at longingly so often, behind its glass-case on the pier. She would quite deserve that and other little marks of favour as well perhaps, if events proved her not to have been guilty of wiling old John Maynard's fortune from him by those well-remembered crocodile tears.

"You are really a very good girl, Babette, to remember the mending," she said cordially, "and as I think it likely I may have to talk over some important business with Dr. Maynard when he comes in, I shall be much obliged to you if you will get it done."

Lesbia ran upstairs quite elated with the few kind words and the success of her little scheme, and forbore to scold Walter for lifting the heaped-up work-basket from its shelf in the wardrobe before she came up, and disturbing its contents by thrusting his hands into it.

"You are going to be very good boys all this afternoon, Walter and Bobby," she said coaxingly, "and when I have finished my work I will tell you over again the whole story of the terrible fight at Ballyowen fair, and how nearly your cousin John Thornley had his arm broken by the red-haired Irishman, who tried to pull him off his horse."

The conservatory was a dilapidated little place entered by a door and some stone steps from the back-room where Dr. Maynard occasionally saw his patients. It was many years since all pretence of keeping it supplied with plants had been abandoned, and it was seldom entered now by anyone but Lesbia, who liked to shut herself in among the cobwebs and broken flower-pots because it was the only place in the house where she could feel herself quite

safe from the boys, who did not dare to pursue her across their father's territory. She used to study her lessons there, for the masters her brother and sister insisted on giving her. There she diligently carried on the skilful contrivances with her needle and scissors, and stores of ribbon and net, that gave her much-worn gowns and bonnets the dainty air so puzzling to Ellen Daly. There she laughed aloud, and sometimes cried and trembled over her sister's letters from Ireland ; and there, seated on the stone steps with her elbows on her knees, and her dimpled chin propped between her hands, she dreamed her girlish dreams of all the good the future was to bring her. If the thronging, brightly-coloured thoughts could only have taken shape as they rose up and photographed themselves on the cracked panes of glass round her, what a curious and pretty series of decorations the old tumble-down outhouse would have had, and how surprised Lesbia would have been, on getting up from her seat and walking round when the hour of castle-building was over, to observe what a very prominent place a certain slim, dark-eyed personage held in all the pictures ! She would have been quite certain that she did not really think as highly of herself as all that, and was not in truth so selfish as to want so many good things and so much praise and prosperity all for herself. The bright fancies, however, generally came when the fingers were idle. Work, unless it was very pretty work, had rather a depressing effect on Lesbia's spirits, and on that day there were several reasons for her thoughts taking the sombre hue of the dull grey material she was forced to look at. She had got up in the morning expecting something very pleasant to happen that afternoon, and oh, what a dull, trying day it had been ! How leaden the sea and sky looked, seen through the dusty, cobwebby glass panes ! How melancholy the wind sounded, and the flap, flap of the untrained briar-rose branches against the conservatory roof ! When she and the young Dalys parted last night at the garden-gate, she had said to herself that she would enjoy one more merry day with her friends, and not allow herself to think once of what was coming, but the rain had cheated her of her respite. Of course there would be fine days after this. Even at Whitecliffe it could not rain for ever, and she and Ellen and Connor would

walk and sail again together ; but it would not be quite the same as it had been. It never was the same in a party when one member of it had gone away. Mr. Pelham Daly's departure was the beginning of the break-up of all that had made this summer so different from every other. The end would come very soon. Other people left Whitecliffe when the dreary autumn and wild winter days set in, but she, Lesbia, had to stay there always. The Dalys would go certainly. The house opposite would be shut up, or some stupid people would take it, and she would walk down the parade or along the sands with Bobby and Watty, when there would be no possibility of those three figures looming upon her in the distance, whose approach changed the dullest and most monotonous walk into something fresh and pleasant. She might never again hear a word about them through all her life, or perhaps some day Dr. Maynard would read the marriage of one of them from the newspaper at breakfast, and say to his wife, "That Mr. Pelham Daly, who has made such a grand marriage, must surely be the eldest brother of the young lady who once, a good many years ago, took a sort of fancy to Lesbia." That would be the way they would put it, and that would be the truth. Changes would come to others, but she must go on living just here, through long summers when the parade was hot and crowded with strangers who never came to be friends, and through windy winters when the place was a desert, teaching Bobby and Watty, and darning their socks on rainy days among the broken flower-pots till—till—she was thirty perhaps, or even forty, and had deep hollows under her eyes and grey streaks in her hair, and had grown silent and sour-looking like the Miss Johnstones next door. Lesbia could not bear the picture she had conjured up one moment longer, it was too dreadful ; she snatched the sock she was darning from her hand with a childish gesture of despair, and, turning round, threw her arms on the upper step of the flight she was sitting on, and, leaning her forehead against them, groaned aloud. Down fell the work-basket by her side, hopping from step to step in its fall, and scattering its miscellaneous contents all around. Lesbia sprang up to arrest its progress, and there, staring her in the face on the top of a pile of stockings, lay the two letters Walter had kept back in the

morning. She seized them with a cry of joy, hardly caring to consider how they came to be there, and tore open the uppermost envelope. A sheet in her brother's handwriting caught her eye first. The sight caused a thrill of alarm, for it was not often John wrote to her. Oh! if while she had been groaning over imaginary troubles, bad news from him awaited her. If Bride should be ill. Away flew her self-occupation and little vanities, dispelled by a tumult of tender fears.

"My dear little sister," she read, "I flatter myself, as a letter from me is rather a rarity, that you will take my sheet and read it first. You had better do so, for I have some important news to tell you, and you will understand it in my plain words sooner than if you get it first wrapped up in all the loves and cautions and congratulations that Bride is busy just now putting into her sheet. Of course you have often heard of our old grand-uncle John Maynard. I think you saw him four years ago when he spent a day at Whitecliffe, and I hope he left a sufficiently pleasant impression of himself on your mind for you to feel some sorrow when I tell you he is dead. Call back and cherish any kind recollection of him you can, little Babette, for he was very good to you in his last thoughts. He has left all his fortune to you, so that in reading these words in my letter a new sort of life opens out before you. May you be thoroughly happy and act worthily in it, little one! You will hardly understand at first all the change it will make, but one immediate consequence of what has happened is, that there is no longer any need for us three to live apart. We are setting our wits to work to devise a speedy method for transporting you here; so be prepared to take a journey to Ireland soon. Be sure that Bride and I rejoice utterly in your good fortune, and mentally shake hands with you on it from across the sea. If anyone else says anything, satisfy your conscience (you see I am giving you credit for being too scrupulous concerning other people's rights to be over-elated with your own luck) by reflecting that old John Maynard had a right to do what he pleased with his own money; he got very little pleasure out of it while he was alive, and he has chosen you to enjoy the benefit of his savings and his labours because

you are the youngest pet child of our mother, who was a daughter to him once, and the most like her. If those two have met up there after their long estrangement, Bride and I think that she will be glad of what he has done for you. I am writing to explain it to all the Maynards. By the way, one clause of the will enacts that you are to take the name of Maynard, and give it to your husband if—or shall I say when you marry—so you will keep our dear mother's name, Lesbia Maynard, to the end of the chapter.

“Your affectionate brother and faithful guardian,

“JOHN THORNLEY.”

Lesbia read this letter twice over before the full meaning of the words forced itself on her mind; and then it was not elation, nor joy, nor regret for other people's disappointment, that rushed in with it. The tender little heart swelled first, with a pang of remorseful shame, such as a little child feels who has been angry with its mother for leaving it alone, and been surprised on her return by the present of a fine new toy. She had been discontented with her lot, thinking herself hardly used, and all the while God and that old man had been preparing this wondrous change for her. She bent her head down humbly on her clasped hands, and tried to shape a prayer out of the tumult of thoughts and emotions that welled up. Had the old life really gone from her in that moment? The stocking-darnings, Mrs. Maynard's perpetual fault-finding, Bobby's fits of sulks over his lessons, the shabby clothes, the grumblings she used to hear against Bride and John for not sending more money? Was it all over, and in its place a dazzling vista of prosperity and joy opening out before her? How much easier it would have been to bear patiently all the little pains of the old life, if she had only known they were not to last for ever! She certainly would not have given Bobby that box on the ear last night when he overthrew her work-box, or have refused to cover Johnny's books when he last went back to school, because he had teased her so all the holidays. For five minutes, instead of looking forward, Lesbia was absorbed in wishing vehemently that she could have two or three of the last years over again, that she might so corrupt herself in them as

to make them a worthy background for what was to come. Well, it would be easy to make up for every shortcoming now. She would forgive all little wrongs, and make everyone in the house a splendid present the very first thing. Mrs. Maynard should have a velvet dress, and the Doctor a new carriage, and Bobby and Walter every toy or story-book they had ever mentioned with longing. She would be a benevolent fairy, divining everyone's wishes, and scattering gifts in their path. A great wave of intoxicating joy rushed in now, swallowing up all soberer thoughts. She seized Bride's closely written sheets and began to read, only pausing now and then to press eager kisses on the affectionate words. As she reached the last sentence, a bell in the house rang, and she started up with exactly the same feeling she had had a hundred times before, when that sound had called her back from a brilliant day-dream.

The tea-bell—was it possible that this was a common day, and that people were going to take their meals just as usual? The news John's letter had brought faded and lost all significance for her—just as a castle-in-the-air would have faded. She did not believe a word of her change of fortune. Life was going on just as usual, and there was she, her work undone, and the contents of Mrs. Maynard's work-basket scattered all over the conservatory floor. She began to collect the socks and replace them in the basket with trembling fingers; the last thing she took up was Connor's letter. More news on that wonderful day. Curiosity conquered fear, and she opened and read. The rhymes seemed to ring in her head and make her giddy. Did they belong to the old Lesbia, who sat down on the steps with her work two hours ago? or to the new one that was coming? She felt like a person standing on a bridge, leading from one country to another, who can only hear the swell of the dividing waters rushing below. "Yet, oh! she wears the plainest gown." A little smile came to her lips, as she paused over that line, on her third reading, and before she had made up her mind whether she was glad or sorry that the person who wrote it would have to change his description of her in the future, the conservatory door half opened, and the parlour-maid, with a very satirical expression of face, poked her head in.

"Mrs. Maynard desires her respectful compliments, and wishes to know how much longer it is Miss Lesbia Thornley's pleasure to keep them all waiting for tea."

Lesbia drew up her head, and mounted the steps slowly. John's letter had grown perfectly real again; but the warm pleasant thoughts about good-will to all, and splendid presents, had received a painful check. She understood quite well that Mrs. Joseph Maynard had sent her a declaration of war, and that she must not expect anyone in that house to be glad with her to-night. It was hard to have to bring her tumult of feeling under the ken of cold unsympathising eyes—hard to have no kind shoulder near to lean her throbbing head against, while she talked out her wonder and excitement. John and Bride were far out of reach, and she felt very lonely. There was that second letter in her hand, perhaps after all it told better news than the first. It was balm to her wounded heart to know that someone had been reeling all those fine things about her, while the Maynards loved her so little. She thought she should always feel very much obliged to Mr. Connor Daly for writing her that letter, even though he had remarked upon the poorness of her gowns. She paused under the gas-burner in the hall, for it was already dark in the house, to study once more the handwriting on the outside of the letter, and as she held the envelope up to the light her eye fell on the monogram outside—P.D. All at once a vivid crimson flushed her face, and after a furtive glance round to see that no one was near, she raised the corner of the paper to her lips, and then thrusting it deep into her pocket, walked boldly into the parlour to confront her angry cousins.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Ah, could we live
As friend with friend,
As though each passing hour must give
That friendship sudden end."—ANON.

"COME, Ellen. All stratagems are fair in love; and if you don't drop such a hint of Cousin Anne's alarms as will frighten Lesbia Maynard into joining us in our sudden flight to Castle Daly, I'll be forced to forge a letter

from her precious brother to summon her to Ireland in a hurry. He'll have to get his head broken in a scrimmage; —or stay, he shall fight a duel with Darby O'Roone and be shot through the heart, dead; and the sister, hurrying to meet the corpse as it is brought in at the front door, shall fall down and break her leg. I'll write a neat letter from old Dr. O'Moore conveying the pleasing intelligence, if you persist in your obstinacy: for, to leave the darling at twenty-four hours' notice, just after telling her she's the jewel of my heart, and without knowing how she takes the news, is what Connor Daly is not the boy to do—let Pelham Daly say what he will."

"And you would frighten her to death to prove your affection!"

"Once get her safely wiled away with us, and leave it to me to comfort her, and let her know, all in good time, that the letter was just a *slight* misunderstanding."

"She would hate you for ever afterwards for giving her such a fright."

"Not she, when she understood it was all the way I had of keeping near her. If I thought she had such a poor heart as not to put up with a bit of a fright about a brother or a sister, that her lover planned to save them from parting, by Jove! Pelham would be welcome to have her, for she'd not be the girl for me."

"I should think it the poor heart that would put the lover above the brother. What will you say, Con, when I do that same?"

"Find a lover to love you half as well as your brother Connor, and you are welcome to put him where you will."

"Oh, the King of Blarney that he is; but I shall not look out for one that will match you that way: and, Connor dear, I think you have carried the blarney a taste too far with Lesbia, and that she is annoyed by your sending her those verses. I wrote a little note last night to let her know that we were leaving Whitecliffe in a day or two, and there has been no sign in answer from her yet. She has not appeared at window or door, and just now I saw Mrs. Maynard leave the house, driving the whole troop of boys before her, and no Lesbia. Can she be ill?"

"I vow I'll not leave the place if she is, till I have seen her again. She has the tenderest little heart in the world; and you may depend my verses——"

"Have half killed her with the laugh over them she has had. Oh, Connor, how glad I am I'm not in love with anyone, and that no one's in love with me. I would not have the pleasure of going home spoilt by having to give a thought or a look back to the noblest lover in the world. I am glad there is not the least beginning of a slender thread to hold my heart from home."

Ellen danced to the window, threw it up as she spoke, and leaned out. "You won't get a sorrowful good-bye from me," she cried; "you poor little bits of white stones that call yourselves rocks, and you dull, leaden sea down there creeping up to them, and you great lonely cornfields and meadows, and straight roads, where one never meets a friendly face, or hears a 'God save you kindly.' Won't I shake the dust of you from my feet when I go with a laughing heart!"

"Without a thought of the friend you leave behind you? That's what a woman's friendship's worth."

"Little Lesbia? Of course, I shall be sorry to say good-bye to her; but, Con, I can't seriously put her beside Cousin Anne and home. Oh, the smell of the peat, and the sparkle of our own lake, and the thunder of real waves on the shore, and the friendly warm words, and faces that brighten when one comes near! I did not know how sick my heart was for them all till now. It will be always that way with me. You may make much of falling in love, if you like. With me nothing will ever come near home and my own people. Those blessed, stupid fears of Cousin Anne's, how I thank them for dragging us back?"

"If thanks and blessings are flying about I shall put in my claim for a share. Trace back far enough, and I'm the moving spring that set all the little wheels in motion that pull the rope that is drawing you."

"Connor, I hope not! How can you have had anything to do with our people's discontent against Mr. Thornley, and the troubles that have worked papa up to such a state of indignation that he cannot rest here a week longer?"

"Not intentionally, perhaps; but if I had not stood by

Dennis Malachy at the time you know of, and cleverly kept my father and other people from finding him out for the sworn rebel and Ribbonman I knew him to be, would he ever have had that little place by the edge of the bog given to him? And if my father had not put him there, could Mr. Thornley have turned him out? And if he had not had his roof lifted off his head, would there have been the black blood there is between his faction and Mr. Thornley? Cousin Anne would never have heard that gun fired, and we should have stayed here till the end of the chapter."

"You don't think it a fancy of Anne's. You think the danger real, and that Dennis Malachy is in it?"

"I think Thornley is a dunderheaded pedant, who will set the country on fire if he's left to work his own will; and that it is high time my father was home again. I agree with Anne that he ought never to have left his post," said Connor, grandly.

"It's easy talking; but with mamma so ill, and always so sad-hearted, I don't know what he could have done but travel about to please her. There are moments when I hate myself for being glad to go home; for, Connor, I saw a look on her face when we were all talking and laughing last night that just broke my heart. She looked as if she thought it was to her death she was going, and you and I laughing over it. I hope the day won't come, Con, when you'll hate to think it was your doing."

"If you don't manage it so that Lesbia Maynard goes with us, I'll hate to think of it now. Ellen, is not the door of the Red House opening this minute? Is not that she herself coming down the garden to the street? You look; I dare not."

"Gracious! what a sudden fit of modesty. Yes, there she is, with her head up, stepping daintily. What pretty, gay-plumaged little bird is she like? There must be company at the Maynards'. She is wearing the lilac-chequered silk dress that becomes her so well, and generally only comes out on Sunday, and her freshest bonnet. Perhaps it is a protest to show you that she does not always wear the 'poorest gown,' and scorns to fall back upon the airy clothing you propose to invest her with."

"Ellen, don't. You have not a spark of poetry in your

composition, I declare, or you would let those lines alone. Why, positively there's Pelham rushing out to open the door; he must have been on the look-out for her from the dining-room window. Hang him! he'll get the first word, and fancy that it is for his sake she looks down-hearted about our leaving Whitecliffe."

"But I don't think she does look down-hearted. As well as I can judge from the window, she is a little more smiling and important than usual in her lilac dress—like a little bantam hen fur-belowed down to her feet."

"I shall rush off, and come back in time to escort her home, and have her for a few minutes all to myself; I can't stand Pelham's watching."

Connor condescended to the undignified measure of peeping over the balusters when he had reached the landing of the topmost story of the house. He had the satisfaction of seeing Lesbia Maynard mount the lowest flight of stairs alone; but he had previously surprised a look on her face, as she and Pelham stood on the door-mat together shaking hands, that disposed him to dash into his own room and relieve his mind for the next quarter of an hour by throwing his boots and hair-brushes about.

Lesbia paused at the drawing-room door to put up her hands and try to smooth the inconvenient rush of colour out of her burning cheeks. She herself was not at all surprised at the great bound her heart had given when the door had opened and she had found herself face to face with Pelham Daly on the door-mat. It was only natural she should start and look confused; for just at that very moment she had been saying to herself that he must have left Whitecliffe hours ago, and that she should certainly never see him again. The surprise was quite enough to account for and excuse her blushes, but she did not care to bring them under Ellen's eyes. She thought it behoved her to be very calm and dignified on the occasion of this visit. Important events had occurred since she was last in that room, and it would require all the judiciousness she could muster to speak of them worthily to the friend whose character, frank and gay as her manners were, somehow or other puzzled her a little.

Ellen saw the effort and constraint in Lesbia's manner

at a glance, and before they were seated exclaimed, "What is the matter? What has happened since the day before yesterday, Babetta?"

"Oh, so many things; you can have no idea," said Lesbia; and then she possessed herself of the blind-tassel that had been Pelham's plaything the day before, and began to plait and unplait its threads; while Ellen, looking down into her face, wondered what the expression exactly was that had come into it within the last forty-eight hours, and changed it so greatly.

"I got your letter last night," Lesbia began, waking up at last.

"And you are *so* sorry to lose us," Ellen cried, feeling penitently that she had not rated the warmth of Lesbia's affectionateness rightly before.

"What makes you say *so* sorry?"

Ellen passed her finger lightly along a red line that encircled Lesbia's eyes. "Don't I know how this comes?" she said; "and will I ever forget that you cared enough for us to shed tears at our going, you dear little friend? Nay, don't colour so furiously; you don't suppose I would let the conceited boys know? there would be no bearing with their vanity for ever afterwards if I did."

"It was not that," said Lesbia, glowing brighter and brighter, till she was obliged to put up her hands again to hide her cheeks. "Ellen, I can't tell you stuck up on a chair; let me come and sit on that stool by your feet, and then I shall be able to speak. Some news came to our house yesterday."

"And we had news too—excellent news—for it has determined papa, as I told you, to go back to Ireland at once. You will not be able to match that, I am afraid."

"I don't know; but, Ellen, I must tell you first that I did not cry because you were to leave Whitecliffe, but because I have had a great quarrel with my cousins. Mrs. Maynard has been very unkind to me."

"My poor, dear Babetta! but that is nothing new; does it not happen every day?"

"Yes, indeed; but this quarrel was serious, and the unkindness what I cannot forget. She called me a serpent and a hypocrite, and said that John and Bride had

deceived her—and—I answered. I don't know how it happened, for I had been feeling so kindly towards her a few minutes before; but all the angry thoughts that I have had in my heart against her for seven years seemed under the provocation of her grudging words to rise up and fly out of my mouth. I was not frightened at the moment, but I have been shaking and trembling almost ever since. This morning she is sorry, and would like to be friends with me again, but I cannot. She showed me her heart last night, and it was so full of envy and grudging I can never bear with her again. Ellen, do you think your mother would let me travel with you to Ireland when you go, to join John and Bride?"

"Think? I am sure she will. It is just what Connor and I were planning. Of course, you shall go home with us at once, and break free from Mrs. Maynard for ever—bad luck to her. I do congratulate you now, Babetta, though you don't know what it is you are going to. Why, your news is as good as ours."

"But you have not heard it yet; the quarrel came afterwards. I had my news in a letter from Ireland."

"So ours came."

"But they cannot be the same; for mine concerns myself—me more than any one else in the world," said Lesbia, raising her head, that had been half resting against Ellen's knee. "Do you remember what I told you once about my rich grand-uncle, John Maynard?"

"I guess, I guess! he is dead, and has left all his money to you; and you cannot rest till you have seen your brother, and given up the inheritance to him, that he only lost through his faithfulness to your father. I remember the story quite well; and, dear Lesbia, I have always been expecting this to happen, and that you would act as you are going to do. If your mean-spirited cousins oppose your wish to do justice to your brother, we will stand up for you and help you through. I suppose that was what the quarrel began upon?"

"Why, no. I had not thought of all that. I am not so quick as you. I don't suppose I could give my fortune away, or that anything would induce John or Bride to take it. You don't know them. Here is John's letter; read what he says."

"I like it," Ellen pronounced, when she came to the end. "Well, I suppose it will be all the same, for you cannot be rich without your brother and sister sharing. They who provided for you ever since your mother died, they'll never be so unkind as not to take part of what you have now."

"Of course we shall live together; that is the great happiness my fortune brings to me. But still it is I who shall have to take my uncle's name, and be Lesbia Maynard, and an heiress. John calls himself my faithful guardian, you see."

"He has always been that, has he not?"

"Yes, indeed. I have not seen them for seven years—not since I was a little child; but I know they are the best people in the world. I don't suppose I shall ever laugh and joke with them as you do with your brothers. Bride is so old, and John so dreadfully clever. I am going home, but I don't know what home will be like. Last night, after the quarrel with my cousins, I think I felt more frightened at the change in my fortune than glad. The one cheerful thought I had to turn to was the prospect of travelling with you, whom I know, to Castle Daly, and have you near me at first to help me."

"That we will. We will have glorious times all together there."

"But—but you will not all be there?"

"All but Pelham; he remains with us till we leave Whitecliffe, and then goes to Oxford to take his degree. I suppose we shall have him living at home always after that, unless papa consents to his going into the army, as he wishes. Castle Daly is not to him what it is to Connor and me; he longs to get away to India—anywhere from the poor old place, that is not just trim and grand enough for him; but there are difficulties in the way. Mamma does not like parting with him, and papa talks of expense. I don't know how it will be settled."

"I must say good-bye now, or I shall keep the Maynards' dinner waiting, and be scolded again. You will let me know what your mother says about taking charge of me on the journey, before post time, will you not? And, Ellen, perhaps you will not mind not saying anything about my fortune to your brothers or any one, just yet? I

had rather not speak of it again till after I have seen John and Bride."

"I understand. You think you may possibly be able to give the fortune up to your brother, or divide it with him ; and in that case you had rather not have it spoken of as yours now. I will be careful. I won't even be provoked to give a hint, if a person we know of takes liberties, in verse, with your gowns again. Oh, Babetta, how I shall laugh at him for that by and by."

"At him ? But I thought you said you never did laugh at him—that you were afraid."

"Afraid of laughing at Connor ! I do nothing else but laugh at him all day long. Is not he the boy one must laugh at and love ? There, I hear him opening his door softly upstairs, that he may be ready to meet you accidentally on the stairs as you go out and escort you home."

"Oh, no, no ; don't let him," cried Lesbia, whose changeable face had suddenly clouded over with a blank look of mortification. "Please, please stop him ; I could not bear to talk nonsense to him to-day, I have so much to think of. I want to get home quietly without any more talk, I do indeed."

"You shall, then, if I have to hold Connor down in his chair ; only don't tire your poor eyes with any more tears. Babetta, you really must not be so rainy when you get to Ireland. The sky does all the weeping there, and our faces have to make sunshine. I shall not let you do anything but laugh at Castle Daly."

With a hasty farewell Lesbia ran downstairs and fled across the road, and up the little garden path, not suffering herself to pause and take breath till she was safe shut into the attic bedroom she shared with Bobbie and Wattie. There was no real occasion for so much haste ; and she rather wondered at herself for the energy of her flight, not knowing that it was, in truth, from an unwelcome thought she was fleeing. The thought overtook her, of course, as soon as she stood still and began to take off and fold away her walking dress. It came in the shape of another of the revulsions of feeling from elation to depression, that had been uneasily rocking her poor little heart and brain for the last twenty-four hours. There had been a certain glow upon her—a bright haze of exultation

and new consequence investing all her surroundings, when she had stood before the glass, an hour before, dressing herself for her visit to the Dalys; and now she felt as if she had had a fall, and was bruised and shaken by it. Those verses that had been chiming in her head all the morning did not mean so very much, after all. They were no secret between herself and one other person; Ellen Daly had laughed over them, and Connor had written them.

She would be grateful to Connor, she resolved; he had been her first friend and champion, and certainly he wrote beautiful verses; only he need not have said the *poorest* gown, poor was such an ugly word, and was not applicable to her when she was dressed her worst, really; and somehow the remark seemed a greater liberty in him than if it had come from some one else whom she could better forgive for knowing always what she had on, and for perhaps thinking nothing good enough for her.

Then this fortune. Ellen Daly had not seemed to think of it as really hers at all; it had struck her only as a thing to be given away at once, just as if its having been left to her did not invest her with a lasting right in it. Lesbia stood still for nearly a quarter of an hour mechanically smoothing a crease out of her bonnet string, and turning this reflection over and over in her mind.

With all her heart and soul she wished and intended to be generous to John and Bride. She meant to give them everything she had; but then she had thought of always going on *giving*, not of doing it once for all, and having no power or part in the matter afterwards; becoming John's little sister again, instead of being, as she had begun to think herself, Lesbia Maynard his ward, to whom he was faithful guardian. That hasty, utter giving up of all at once to John Thornley looked rather a flat and uninteresting conclusion to the bright dreams and hopes, that, even in the last twelve hours, she had begun to weave round herself.

Another sort of giving away had in truth been in her mind, but, as she finally rolled up her bonnet strings, she decided with a sigh that the opportunity for it would now never come: the glorious chance of being wooed poor and giving herself rich, which had seemed so close to her

this morning. Before she had done fancying how it possibly might have been, the bell rang, and she had to leave her bonnet on the table and run down breathless to dinner.

CHAPTER XV.

ELLEN did not find a good opportunity for bringing forward Lesbia's request till the evening, when the family were sitting together after dinner; and she was so conscious that Pelham's and Connor's eyes were turned upon her the instant she introduced her friend's name into the conversation, that she could not bring out her plan quite in the simple, unconcerned manner she had intended. Her eagerness was enough to raise a host of little nervous scruples and doubts as to the propriety of the arrangement in Mrs. Daly's mind.

In the first place, who was Lesbia Maynard, and how did they know that she was any relation to the Mr. and Miss Thornley who were now living at Castle Daly? And again, what proof had they that her brother and sister approved of her leaving her cousin, Dr. Maynard's house? Might they not be abetting an act of rebellion against rightful authority, if they aided her sudden flight? When Connor and Ellen had exhausted themselves in vehement explanations and assurances on these points, came another difficulty, which Mrs. Daly, by way of giving a turn to the conversation, and possibly saving herself from a second avalanche of indignant words, referred to her husband:

"If this Miss Maynard, or Thornley, is sister to your agent, and is likely to live with him for the future, would it be well to encourage such intimacy between her and Ellen, as a long journey together would certainly lead to?"

"What does it matter?" answered Mr. Daly, carelessly. "What harm could Mr. Thornley do Ellen? And besides, I don't suppose he or his sisters will continue to live in the neighbourhood of Castle Daly after I return there."

"And nothing can make me more intimate with Lesbia than I am already," cried Ellen.

Pelham had risen from the table and retired to a dark corner of the room with a newspaper, while Ellen and

Connor had been dinning their mother's ears with assurances of Lesbia's respectability and identity: just now he came forward again and leaned over her chair.

"You forget, mother," he said, quietly, "that these Thornleys are relations of Uncle Charles and of your own."

"Are they, indeed? Yes, I suppose it is so; but we lost sight of them so long ago that, though I can recollect some Thornleys visiting at Pelham Court, I don't know what degree of relationship there may be between ourselves and these young people."

"They are cousins. Their grandfather, Sir Francis Thornley, married your aunt. John Thornley's father was the youngest son of that Sir Francis."

"Pelham, how came you to know all that?" asked Ellen.

"I looked it out in the pedigree," said Pelham firmly; "it is right that we should know the fact, and treat our own relations with proper consideration, whatever position of life they may be in now."

"To be sure," cried Connor, laughing; "such nobs as we are. If people do happen to be so lucky as to have a drop of good old obstinate Pelham blood in them, let us treat them with reverence by all means. Up with the purple token on a flag—a drop of unmistakeable English blood—and let the Irish half of us own our masters. It beats keeping a gig for a warrant of respectability, to be related in the fourth degree to a Pelham. Why have not the savages round Castle Daly been readier to do homage?"

"Hush, Connor, hush," said Mr. Daly, putting a hand on his son's arm.

Mrs. Daly was, meanwhile, looking up into her eldest son's face, and reading an expression in the dark eyes that met hers, which caused her a certain *serrement de cœur*.

"I did not know that you had much acquaintance with these friends of Ellen's, Pelham," she said apologetically; "I thought you objected to the intimacy once."

"I made a mistake then," he answered bluntly.

"Well, if you really think it right, and your father approves; but" (turning again to Mr. Daly with an eager air, as if grasping at a last straw) "have there not been complaints against these Thornleys in your Irish letters?"

Does not Anne O'Flaherty think ill of them for some cause or other?"

"An excellent reason for your thinking well of them, is it not, Eleanor?" Mr. Daly answered, smiling. "I should say that settled the matter. Anne O'Flaherty dislikes both the Thornleys cordially, so you have nothing to do but write at once to their sister, and invite her, in your warmest manner, to join us on the journey. It is only a mark of disagreement due from you to Anne."

It was not often that he addressed sarcastic remarks to her now, and they had not quite the same effect they had formerly. A faint flush on the faded cheek, a bewildered, appealing expression of pain in the eyes answered them now, instead of the old panoply of cold reserve.

Mr. Daly saw at once that his words had given pain, and tried to atone for them by an eager—

"Do just as you like about it, however, Eleanor; you are the best judge."

She leaned back in her chair wearily.

"I wish you would all go out and leave me alone," she said, "for I am very tired of hearing you all talk at once. Ellen will carry out her plan, of course; I give her free leave: but I wish she was not so ingenious in inventing schemes to bring new cares on me, as if I had not always more than I have strength for."

The party dispersed. Ellen settled her mother for her after-dinner rest on the sofa in the drawing-room, and then hurried off with Connor to make a late call at the house opposite and talk over the arrangements for the journey with Lesbia. Mr. Daly, after finishing his newspaper and his bottle of claret, turned out for his evening stroll up and down the parade with his cigar. He was seldom out long, before one or another of his numerous chance acquaintances joined him; but it was somewhat of a surprise to him when Pelham slipped his hand under his arm and volunteered to accompany him in his walk. The attention pleased Mr. Daly a good deal, and even flattered him. Pelham was habitually so reserved, that any advance towards intimacy from him was apt to be received as a mark of favour, especially by his father, who often wearied himself in vain attempts to win the same open-hearted confidence from his eldest son that the younger children

gave him spontaneously. Mr. Daly took as much pains to be an agreeable companion that evening as ever courtier did while seeking to worm himself into the favour of a great man. He gave up his favourite lounge on the parade, where he was sure of plenty of admiring companionship, and humoured his son's love of quiet by choosing the most solitary part of the beach for their walk. He talked confidentially of future plans; he told his very best stories of the stirring times of his youth; he chose subject after subject, sending anxious glances into his companion's face to discover what most roused and interested him; but these affectionate wiles were quite thrown away upon Pelham. It was not the custom at Pelham Court for members of one family to spend themselves greatly in conversation with each other. It was thought a mere waste of energy there, to be amusing and agreeable to people whom you were in the habit of seeing every day. To find his father so witty and entertaining only puzzled Pelham, and caused him to shrink further and further into his shell, feeling himself aggrieved as one unjustly accused of being "company."

"Can the lad have any folly on his conscience that he wants to confide in me?" Mr. Daly thought when, in spite of all his efforts, the conversation came to a standstill. "Connor makes his confessions within the first half hour of his coming home, but it may be the way of this one to keep it all in till the last evening. What can I say to help him? but stay, it is coming."

"Father," Pelham began, hesitatingly, "I have been thinking——"

"That's right, my boy; tell me everything that troubles you—don't let there be any secrets between us. That's all I ask of either Connor or you. You will always find me your best friend if you are only open with me."

"Open with you! Secrets! cried Pelham, startled and affronted. "I don't know what you mean. I have no secrets."

"Ah well, finish what you were going to say, however."

"I was only going to say that as I am not absolutely obliged to get back to Oxford for another month, I thought it might be as well for me to travel back to Ireland with you, and spend a fortnight or so at Castle Daly."

Mr. Daly's face brightened, and he gave the hand that rested on his arm an affectionate squeeze against his side.

"Thank you, Pelham. I understand your motive well. It's for your mother's sake you think of this; and you are right—it will make the trial of going back there easier to her if she has you with her, for she clings to you beyond us all. I know it's a sacrifice on your part, and I thank you for making it. Even if the loss of time should make a difference in your degree, you'll not regret what you did for her sake."

Why could he not look a little pleasant in response to these cordial thanks? Mr. Daly wondered. What could his absolute silence and the deep flush that overspread his face signify? It was a little hard to have all his efforts at cordiality so persistently thrust aside.

Pelham was longing to speak. He had never felt so ashamed of himself, so like an impostor in his life, as he did while his father thanked him and pressed his arm. He who indulged habitually in such scorn of Connor's and Ellen's little flatteries and polite insincerities, he to be afraid of explaining the true motive of his conduct, and silently accept undeserved praise! It was that appeal to his confidence that had kept him silent. With a person who could not receive a simple remark without imagining it the beginning of a confession, how could he attempt to explain the very peculiar circumstances that caused him to feel the duty of protecting Lesbia Maynard from Connor's impertinences more important than any other consideration? Pelham put this question to himself, and pondered silently during the rest of the walk home on the annoyance of being made to feel like a hypocrite: and through all the years of his after life he was never able to hear the swish of waves falling on a stony shore without being brought back by memory to those silent minutes, and wondering what there was in the world he would not now give to regain the power, neglected then, of breaking the monotonous sound by a word spoken cordially to an ear that waited for it.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh fair her face of light
Past the tongue's telling,
Woe was me
E'en to see
Beauty so shining ;
Ever since, hourly
Have I been pining."

S. FERGUSON.

"If one must worry, it is at least an advantage to have a change of anxieties ; and the uncertainties of the post here do me the service of keeping me in a state of expectation about something else than your return home," Bride Thornley remarked to her brother as she met him at the garden gate, one late September day about a week after Anne O'Flaherty's visit. "Here's another day gone, and still no letters from Lesbia or the Maynards. What can it mean ?"

"It means that Mike Casey has overturned the post-car as he was racing down the hill into Ballyowen, and has broken two of his own ribs and the car's back, all of which will take some mending to restore them even to their original crazy condition."

"I hope it was not till after he had posted our letters to Lesbia."

"That's all you think of, you strong-minded woman. It was three days ago."

"Well, I really can't feel very compassionate over Mike Casey and the car—the catastrophe has been due so long. By the way he drives he ought to break his ribs every day ; and I have always been wondering why he did not. But, having heard this, had you the sense to drive round by Ballyowen and inquire for letters ?"

"I had the sense."

"Well ?"

"Well, Father Peter is holding a station at Saint Patrick's well ; the man at the shop where the post-office is has gone to his duty ; and the woman and boy can neither speak English nor read writing. Popular people go in and turn the letters over for themselves, and take what they like ; but I am not to be trusted. I think I could have

come over the old woman with half-a-crown to let me have my turn at the rummage, if Peter Lynch, who was sitting inside the office calmly picking his mistress' letters from a heap, had not said something in Irish that strengthened her virtue to resist temptation."

"You had to go away empty-handed?"

"Yes, and with a conviction amounting to certainty that a packet of letters, which I espied on a shelf, stuck between a treacle jar and a bundle of candles, had our names upon them. I could not collar Peter Lynch, jump over the counter and seize them, could I?"

"I don't mind waiting, if the letters are there. I was beginning to fear the child might be ill, or something wrong with her. John, I don't think I shall be easy now, till we have her with us."

"If you were not Bride I should ask why the company of a sister who is a great heiress is more desirable than that of one who has nothing?"

"And if you were not John I should hate you for having such a detestable thought. You ought to have admired my perfect reasonableness in having kept down my longing for the child when I could not have her company. Let us take another turn on the terrace while we discuss plans for bringing her here. I can allow that this place is beautiful, now I see a fair prospect of getting away from it."

"I shall not go till I have brought affairs here into proper training, and can resign with credit to myself. Please to attach some importance to my career; don't efface me all at once into Miss Lesbia Maynard's guardian."

"Trust me for standing up for your dignity and your career when I once have you safe out of the nest of enemies. I wish I could cure myself of always feeling here as if every word we said to each other was overheard and liable to be twisted to your injury. I wonder where that red-cloaked old woman whose head I see bobbing up behind the wall sprang from? I did not see her when we turned last."

"I saw her hobbling down the road half-an-hour ago. I suspect she is one of your beggars—whom, contrary to all principle, you weakly allow to haunt the house still."

"As far as that one is concerned I can't help myself, for I can't get rid of her. I see who it is now—old Molly

Malachy, the plague of my life. One day when I was gardening by this gate, and she had just left the house with a basketful of broken meat, Miss O'Flaherty passed, and I overheard a conversation between the two. Miss O'Flaherty reproached her with her meanness in begging from *us*, and she excused herself on the plea of fleecing the Egyptians."

"I think that was rather good. Go and see what she wants and send her off."

"Send her off yourself, if you think it's so easy. I wonder what is the least sum she will consent to take from you before she stirs from the gate."

"You imagine that I shall be weak enough to give her anything?"

"We shall see."

John walked down to the garden gate, and Bride strolled on towards Mrs. Daly's flower-borders, the only part of the pleasure-grounds still kept in tolerable order, and chiefly by her hands. The light of the clear September day was dying in the west. The sharp outlines of the grey Maam-Turk hills began to melt into the purpling sky, the trees in the plantation behind the house to group themselves into masses of shadow; the opal colours of sunset had faded from the lake, leaving it a pale sheet of shimmering silver, with fantastic mist-wreaths brooding and gathering on its further shore. A scent of falling leaves and strong-smelling autumn flowers filled the still heavy air. Bride snuffed it up with a sense of satisfaction. Autumnal scenes and evening hours had a special attraction for her. She never found them sad, as other people professed to do; they soothed and even exhilarated her spirits, speaking to her heart in tones she understood with the voices of friends. She had walked through shadows and frosts too long not to be on handshaking terms with them; and it was easier to her to find pleasure in the promise of the future, the hidden hope, the little hints of the new day and the distant summer that evening and autumn whisper of, than in the full beauty of sunshine and flowers that seemed to mock the pale tints in which her own life's history was painted. She paused to gather a handful of autumn violets, and to listen to the deep stillness of the evening. Now and then a strong tone of John's voice reached her, or a shrill whining

exclamation from Molly Malachy. She looked back, and smiled to see that they were talking still, John actually leaning over the gate in an attitude of listening—and—yes—there was a withered, skinny, brown hand on his arm. Well Bride knew he was not the man to shake it off.

What a triumph over him she would have! Yet she wished the colloquy over, for she was losing the opportunity of talking to him on the subject next to her heart. She turned her face again towards the white road, that winding up and down hill into the far distance looked so promising, as if it must some day or other bring something new even into her life. Mechanically her eyes rested on a black spot, appearing just on the verge of sight—Peter Lynch, no doubt, in the three-wheeled car, returning to Ballyowen with his mistress' letters. She traced it into a distinct shape, till a vague feeling of interest and expectation crept over her. A click of the gate and John's footsteps close behind roused her, and she turned quickly.

"Come, now, confess. How much? five shillings? Not less than half-a-crown, I'm very certain."

"Not a halfpenny."

"John, you're putting me off with some disgraceful subterfuge. Why, I saw her hand on your arm, and she is turning even now for another curtsy and 'God save you!' I'm afraid it is something serious. Have you promised her the reversion of my entire wardrobe? or is she to have one of the new slated cottages on the Ballyowen road? What have you given away?"

"Nothing, I protest again: or, to be very exact, about three hours of my own time. I should not like it to get talked about; but I did not see my way to refuse."

"Explain, please."

"It seems that a certain ruffian, commonly called 'Hill Dennis,' is that old crone's son."

"I know that well enough; you turned him out of his holding."

"For very good reasons. He was a thoroughly lawless fellow, a hatcher of mischief. I felt I should never make any way till he was got rid of."

"And for an old woman's tears you have consented to take him back; now I should have got rid of her with sixpence, and you would have sneered at me."

"I tell you I have not consented to anything but to see the man. He has come back to his mother's cabin in an abject state, half-starved and very miserable by her account; and he is willing to give me some information respecting outrages he was concerned in before he went away, that may be very important and useful."

"To turn informer, as they say here. John, I would not have anything to do with him."

"I don't half like it, but living as I do in a network of plots, I must not neglect any chance that offers of learning to distinguish friend from foe, and knowing what to be at. This struggling in the dark with skulking enemies grows too discouraging."

"And is this Dennis to come here?"

"What an innocent question! How much do you suppose the fellow's life would be worth, if it were known he was in communication with me? I have promised to meet him in his old cabin, on the edge of the bog below Lac-y-Core. The place is quite deserted, and gone to ruin. The cabin had to be unroofed a year ago, and no one has ever ventured to live in it, since he was turned out."

"I shall go with you."

"To protect your brother against a skulking, half-starved vagabond; a fine opinion you have of his pluck, madam."

"How do you know that he may not bring half-a-dozen others with him?"

"To tell you the truth, it will not be the first interview. I have seen the fellow before, and he has committed himself too far already, to dare to put himself into communication with any of his former comrades. If you had seen him when he stopped me on the road one night last week, and tried to make me listen to him, shaking at every breath of wind, and terrified at his own shadow, you would have——"

"Pitied the wretch from the bottom of my heart."

"Ay, and the country that produces the breed; secret conspirators of dark crimes who can't even be true to each other."

The ring of scorn in the voice touched Bride a little painfully; she drew a deep breath.

"Thank God, we need not stay much longer in it. I doubt whether it is doing either of us good to be here. It

hardens one's heart to live among people one does not like."

They had walked to the end of the terrace furthest from the road, and now turned again.

The moving speck Bride had been watching was full in sight by this time, and had resolved itself into an outside car, piled high with luggage, and containing three persons.

"Visitors to Miss O'Flaherty, no doubt," observed Bride; "two ladies and a gentleman; country-people of her own, I should say, and young, to judge by the wild way in which they are letting themselves be raced down the hill. See, they are actually standing up on the seat to get a view of the house. They'll be over into the lake in a minute. What an Irish turn-out, to be sure."

The car was now passing the little irregular street of cabins that skirted the lake side, close to the Castle. A man leaning against his doorpost caught sight of its occupants, and throwing up his arms with a wild cry, seized the back of the carriage and allowed himself to be dragged on with it, shouting and screaming as he went. In an instant the village street was thronged, and the progress of the car effectually arrested by a little crowd of men, women, and children, who threw themselves in the way. A dozen hands seized the horses' heads, while gaunt forms pressed round, clutching wildly at the wheels and body of the vehicle, and thrusting excited faces into close proximity with those of the travellers on the car.

The sound of voices raised high—whether in joy or sorrow it was impossible to say—made a sudden break in the stillness of the evening.

"I must inquire what is going on down there," John exclaimed, when they had looked on for a minute and saw no abatement in the excitement. Bride followed at a little distance, thankful that the sound of tumult had not reached them after they had entered the house, when she would certainly have been ordered to sit still and wait in suspense till all was over.

She had reached the outskirts of the crowd before she could learn anything. Then she perceived that the centre of attraction towards which all the gesticulating hands were outstretched, all the eager faces turned, was the tall, slim figure of a girl who was standing up in the car, and holding

down her hands, which at least a dozen old crones had seized to cover them with kisses. Her back was turned towards Bride, who could only fairly see the sloping shoulders towering above the crowd, and a bonnetless head incircled with masses of yellow hair, which made it show as if a faint light played round it.

A vague recollection rose in Bride's mind of an allegorical picture she had once seen, where an aureoled figure of Peace, or Plenty, or Love—she could not remember which—stood on a triumphal car, and showered down blessings on a world that had been perishing in her absence.

Was it a bit of grammerie that had come over with those mist-wreaths from the lake? or what had brought such an old-world scene from a Queen Elizabeth's progress into dirty, tumble-down Daly's Corner, as the village called itself?

There was a movement in the crowd, evidently following some request made by the goddess on the car; the people pressed together, leaving a clear path for some one who was being carefully lifted down; then a figure emerged from the throng—a girlish figure—at the sight of which Bride's heart gave one great bound. A second more and soft arms were round her neck, and a voice that was like an echo from a far-off time was murmuring in her ear—

"Bride, Bride! I am Lesbia. I am your own little sister Babette come home to you. Do say you know me. I knew you and John the instant I saw you coming from the house, and I could not wait to get at you an instant longer."

The confusion was over for Bride after that moment of intense joy: it all resolved itself into Lesbia's happy home-coming, and she had little attention to give to anything else that went on round her. John made his way up to the car, and a few minutes later walked back to the Castle, accompanied by a young lady and gentleman, who introduced themselves to Bride—for Lesbia turned shy after her first impulsive greeting—as Ellen and Connor Daly.

A few words of explanation made all clear. Mr. and Mrs. Daly had hoped to find a carriage from the Castle waiting at Ballyowen to convey them home, but finding that they were not expected they had determined to stay the night at the hotel in the town, while Connor, Ellen,

and Lesbia proceeded in the only conveyance that could be procured to carry the news of their return to the house, and order preparations to be made for their arrival the next morning.

All was confusion and bustle in and about the place for the rest of the evening; but Bride was not in a mood to find fault. Holding Lesbia's hand in hers, and refreshing herself every now and then with a look into her face, she could enjoy the odd little traits of character that the excitement brought out with a lighter heart than she had known for many a day.

She listened with less contempt than might have been expected to an eloquent harangue delivered by Connor from the doorstep to the crowd that followed him to the house; and hardly noticed the impatient shrugs of the shoulders with which John heard his wild promises of help and protection to every one in the better times which, in spite of the scarcity, he asserted were sure to come back now his father was returned to live among them.

The shouts of welcome, the fervent "God save you's," the sight of all those haggard, hungry faces transfigured with joy and hope, touched her heart, in which a new joy and hope for her own life had sprung up. She did not like to believe just then that the millennium of good-will and good fortune which the young orator's lips pictured so glibly had no reality to rest upon, and was nothing but words. She did not even permit herself to feel provoked by Ellen's surprise when she was told that the resources of the Castle Daly larder were at present insufficient to supplement Connor's airy promises by affording a substantial meal to all the vociferous applauders of his oratory; and she hardly showed any incredulity or annoyance at the assertions reiterated by all the bystanders that "there always used to be plenty—the bit and the sup were never wanting in the old times on similar occasions, and were never missed by those who had the heart to give them."

Her temper had a further trial when the increasing darkness drove them all into the house. Bride was by habit and instinct an exact, careful house-manager, and during the three years she had lived at Castle Daly she had grown to have a certain sense of proprietorship in the place. To find herself suddenly deposed was a little trying,

and there was, for a careful house-mistress, considerable mortification in witnessing the joyful alacrity with which the servants she had trained flew in the face of all her instructions at the very first opportunity, in favour of old habits.

"Shure and won't I lay the table for supper this evening as Mr. Connor likes to see it—wid plenty in all the dishes haped up, and the praties in their jackets, and the big punch-bowl in the middle, wid lashings of whisky, and things handy, as they should be."

"Hurry and do it, thin, Katey avoorneen; there's no one to hinder you now. Meself's flying up stairs to snatch off the dabs of white dimity covers and the bits of chintz hangings and curtains that she put up for nateness and cleanliness, she said, and that hide away the ould crimson and yellow and blue furniture that may be a trifle frayed and dirty, but that'll have the rale kindly home look to Miss Eileen's eyes."

Ellen herself was too full of the pleasure of being at home again, and too eager to revisit favourite haunts and hunt out old treasures, to perceive that her raptures might give offence. She and Connor hurried from room to room lamenting over changes and recognizing old ink-stains on carpets and deplorable bumps and dints in walls and furniture with inexplicable outcries of delight and laughter; while Lesbia vacillated between clinging to Bride and listening in absorbed interest to Connor's stories of the childish exploits to which these dilapidations were due.

The most comfortable part of the evening for Bride was after the travellers had retired to their rooms, when she went back into the library and found her brother pacing up and down between the windows with an excited expression on his face that told of not being ready for rest for a long time yet. She slipped her hand under his arm and paced with him. It was a habit of theirs which, since the two had shared responsibilities together, almost invariably ended every anxious or unusually pleasurable day.

"She is a great deal prettier than we expected, is she not, John?" Bride began, after a meditative turn or two.

"I don't know that I expected anything. I had not

thought of it; but she is certainly very beautiful: 'A daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair.'"

"My dear John!—*tall!*—*fair!* Why, she is shorter than I am, and has one of those clear brown skins with rich glows underneath that I think so much more beautiful than mere pink and white."

"Ah, yes, Lesbia has; but when you began to talk of some one being very pretty, I naturally thought you meant the other young lady."

"You think Miss Daly prettier than our Lesbia?"

"I can't help having eyes."

"But, John, she is a lady certainly—one recognizes that through all the over-eagerness and want of calm of manner: but how she did talk and laugh and race about this evening, and how untidily her hair kept falling over her shoulders. I must say I prefer more dignity and reticence in a young lady, don't you?"

"That depends. There's nothing in her to be reticent about. Pure, transparent unconsciousness is hedged round with something quite beyond dignity."

"You are getting quite beyond me. I don't understand you in the least. I must say I thought little Lesbia's sweet, shy manner and gentle little ways a thousand times more bewitching."

"Bewitching; yes. That's the right word for Lesbia. I am ready to allow that she is the most dangerous little lady of the two, if that is what you want me to say. I suppose it is the *little* ways that bewitch. That other manner has too much clear sunshine about it for the working of spells. It makes one feel small, somehow. One's own ridiculous, self-conscious dignity looks a wretched pedestal to be perched upon in the face of such gracious frankness; and yet one is too awkward to get down."

"You seem to have seen a great deal more than I did; I was quite taken up with Babette."

"And you are disgusted with me for not being equally absorbed?"

"Babette's coming home is the great event of the day to us, you must allow. The Dalys are nothing to us, or will be nothing soon."

"Nothing whatever, so we can afford to form candid opinions about them."

"And your opinion really is that Miss Daly is handsomer than Lesbia?"

"Incomparably handsomer. I won't be bullied out of my sober judgment a jot; but what then? Lac-y-Core is a great deal better to look at than the sloping field before our old house at Abbot's Thornley: but I had far rather live in sight of the field than of the mountain for the rest of my life."

"Allow at least before I leave you that Miss Daly's hair was very untidy, and that you would not like to see Lesbia's in the same condition."

"No: I won't yield to feminine pertinacity so far as to allow that. All I saw was that something which I fancied at first was a Will-o'-the-wisp light playing round her head had melted suddenly to streaks of sunbeams."

"If you have taken to metaphors I give you up from to-night. You are a lost man."

CHAPTER XVII.

*"Quid sit futurum cras fuge querere, et
Quem sors dierum cunque dabit, lucro
Appone."* HORACE.

It was the afternoon of the second day after the arrival, and there was at last a little lull in and about the house. Anne O'Flaherty, with Peter Lynch and Murdoch Malachy in her train, had come and gone. The crowd of men with ragged frieze coats tied by the sleeves round their shoulders and thorn-sticks in their hands, that had besieged the door since early morning, had thinned now to two or three still patiently waiting for their turn for a private word "wid his honour." The women who had hung about the gate or squatted by the roadside all day for the chance of a glimpse of Miss Eileen, were dispersing to their mountain cabins, to blow up the peat fire, and put on the big potato-pot, with its this year's scanty portion of bad potatoes, against their husbands came in to supper. John Thornley was sitting at his desk in his own room looking at a pile of finished letters, and listening till the cessation

of voices in the library below should show him that the opportunity he was expecting had arrived for finding Mr. Daly alone and making a communication to him that he too had in store. As he leaned back in his chair, with his eyes fixed absently on the opposite wall, his lips moved as if framing words; and gleams of expression, earnest, satisfied, amused, crossed his face from time to time. An observer would have divined that he was going over the expected interview in imagination, and laying out sentences and arguments that would not be spoken without satisfaction to himself. If Mr. Daly, taking the management of his affairs back into his own hands, chose to resume the old, runious, haphazard courses, it should at least not be for want of plain showing of their folly and iniquity from John Thornley. From the room next his, Bride was issuing, bonneted and shawled, with the purpose of taking a turn up and down the flower-borders with Mrs. Daly. She, too, had some words of interest to insinuate between the remarks about the autumn flowers that would begin the conversation, but there was no need for her to think her sentences out beforehand. It would be difficult enough without that to keep them from tripping off her tongue before the seasonable moment arrived. Good fortune, like ill, seldom comes in single file, but in whole battalions; and that morning had brought a letter to John that had given Bride far deeper pleasure than the news of Lesbia's fortune. It was from a noted literary man for whom John had for years occasionally worked, offering him the editorship of an important literary journal, on such terms as would fully justify him in abandoning other occupations to follow the line to which his inclination pointed, and in which his sister's ambition saw a bright career opening before him.

"It is safe to give a shove upwards to a man who is no longer needy," John had said, as he handed the letter to his sister, carefully guarding face and voice from any touch of triumph. But the sneer did not deceive Bride; she could divine easily enough the thrill of mingled pride and gratitude it was meant to cover.

As she emerged by Mrs. Daly's side into the clear September sunshine, it crossed her mind that she should not have believed, if any one had prophesied it to her, that

anything so triumphant as this task of conveying to Mrs. Daly, in an unconcerned tone, the necessity that had arisen for John's resignation of the agency, coupled with a passing allusion to Lesbia's heiress-ship, would ever have occurred in her life.

Meantime Lesbia, who had spent the greater part of the day shut up with her brother and sister, and who was, to tell the truth, a little wearied and overawed by the amount of good sense and the reasonable plans she had had to listen to, ran lightly up stairs to seek for gayer companions in the old schoolroom, of which Connor and Ellen had made her free on the first evening of her arrival. Her face fell a little when she opened the door and found it almost empty, no one appearing but Ellen, who was seated on the floor in the window recess, with her hands clasped round her knees, looking dreamily out towards the mountains. She turned her head as the door opened, and burst out laughing at Lesbia's little start of dismay.

"Yes, they have gone out; you are late," she said. "They hung about disgusted at your non-appearance till they had worked themselves up to such a pitch of crossness that I was obliged to hunt them away."

"They?"

"The boys, of course. Men are always 'they,' you know, and we women only 'you and I.'"

"How comfortable," cried Lesbia, recovering herself. "I have so much to say to you; it will be quite a treat for you and me to have an hour's talk alone."

"Do you think so?" said Ellen, absently turning her face to the window again.

"Oh, if you don't want me I can go away."

Ellen answered by taking Lesbia's hands and drawing her down to a seat on a dilapidated child's straw chair that occupied a corner of the window recess.

"There, you are enthroned," she cried. "I don't know why, but when we were children, Connor and I used to consider that crazy straw chair the most desirable seat in the whole house. We had a fiction that it imparted magical powers of some sort; and how we used to quarrel for the possession of it! Connor calls it the tripod—it has only three legs left, you see—and grows dangerously inspired when he sits on it still. Try what it will do for you."

"But if you had rather be alone—if you don't want me——"

"I want you, but I am not in a talking mood. Connor and I are bo-a-constrictors about talk; we take great meals of talking, and then we are silent for a long while. I was in the talking stage of joy last night; now I have come to the feeling time. I just want to sit here and watch that lilac shadow eat up the patch of sunshine on the hill beyond the lake, and feel how happy I am. If I talk, I shall lose some of the sights out there."

"Well, I can be silent too. I am sure I have plenty to think about, and much more important things than how a shadow is moving."

Lesbia did not find the tripod a seat favourable to serious meditation, as it required nice skill in balancing to keep it upright. Her eye soon left the landscape outside to stray round the room, and take an astonished inventory of the furniture. She had been used to look up to the Dalys as rather grand people, and to listen to Connor's descriptions of Castle Daly with profound respect; but really the old little garret-room at Whitecliffe that she had shared with Bobbie and Wattie and despised so, was in many respects a better place than this favourite room of Ellen Daly's. There were here and there a few signs of past grandeur, to be sure. That old arm-chair on which her eyes rested, with torn strips of faded blue velvet hanging from the seat, and remnants of gilding on its dented framework, might have figured in some stately drawing-room a hundred years or so ago. Lesbia thrust her hand down into her pocket to feel for her thimble and housewife with a notable instinct to set about sewing up the rents; the velvet need not hang in strips, however faded it was. Then a thought struck her, and she drew her hand out again. It would be as easy to her now to buy new furniture as to mend the old—nay, easier. John had been talking to her that morning, explaining her new position, and the subtle sense of possession had stolen into her mind. It was very pleasant, this new idea of power and consequence that had dawned on her. She fairly turned her back on the landscape now, and shaded her eyes with her hand, intent on pictures of another kind that rose up. What a change a little of her money—say one thousand out of her hundred

thousands—would make in this house! She began to see the place under a new aspect, not exactly settling in her thoughts who were to be the inhabitants of the renovated, stately rooms, but always seeing herself moving about with dignity among a throng of guests, and Ellen Daly looking on from a certain distance, and feeling a kind of astonishment at the change. Other figures glided in and out among the throng, but she would not quite look at them or decide why they were there. She was just conscious of some other presence besides the gay furniture that lent a halo to the scene, but it was something undefined, a long way off from any possibility of being put into words. The minutes slipped on unheeded by the two dreamers in such separate worlds. Ellen was the first to break silence.

"There, it has gone. I have seen the sun set behind Lac-y-Core again. I saw him climb up out of the lake this morning, so I ought to be satisfied; but have I made the most of the day?"

"Bride says that you have been racing about like a mad creature ever since it was light," said Lesbia, a little maliciously.

"With all that, I have not seen all the shapes that Lac-y-Core has taken since sunrise against the sky; and there have been dozens of changes of colour on the side of the ravine that I have not caught, and that may never come again, for no two days are alike here."

"I don't understand caring so very much for things outside the house," said Lesbia. "I am not sure that it is quite right; at least, I know Aunt Maynard thinks it silly."

"My dear Lesbia!"

"Yes, you are surprised to hear me quoting her. I am surprised myself, for I don't forget how tiresome I used to think her sayings a week ago. However, things and people look different when one has left them behind, and when one's own circumstances are changed. Ellen, just look down into the flower-garden. Your mother and Bride are still pacing up and down the broad walk, and Bride is telling your mother about me."

"About you?"

"Why, Ellen, you surely have not forgotten already what I told you at Whitecliffe about my fortune!"

"I am afraid I have been very unsympathizing, but you told me not to speak of it again, and I waited to hear how it was to be—what your brother and sister agreed to do about it."

"About dividing it, do you mean? Ellen, if you knew more of John and Bride you would feel how difficult it would be for me to propose such a plan to them. They don't care for money, but they don't look upon a great fortune as if it were something one could settle what to do with all in a minute. If I had spoken of giving it up to John he would have called me unpractical, and I should have felt I was annoying him."

"Your own brother?"

"But I have not lived with my brother since I was a child; and he is so much older than I am."

"You may well say so much older. He strikes me as wonderfully old, that brother of yours, Babette."

"Indeed, no; I beg your pardon: he is under thirty."

"What does it matter what people call themselves? That's a stupid way of reckoning age, when some people can crowd years and years of living into a day or two. That is what has happened to your brother and sister."

"How do you know?"

"By looking."

"I am afraid you don't like them, then; and yet I thought you seemed very much pleased when John mentioned his having stood at the top of a hill looking down into Miss O'Flaherty's valley so long one day that he quite forgot the business that had brought him there."

"I was very much surprised, just as one is when one picks up a bit of a dead branch, and finds that there are buds upon it; and that it is not so dead as it looks."

"John is not a bit graver or older-looking than a man of his age ought to be."

"Well, he is an Englishman, and why should not he be old and grave if he likes? I'll not hinder him of his pleasure in it, you may be sure. There! he and papa have come out of the house together, their business talk over at last, I hope. Oh, what a mighty stretch and yawn! Papa has thrown off every grain of trouble and care with that, and means to enjoy the evening; but look, your brother puts his hand on his arm and begins talking

again; he is urging papa to do something or other he does not wish to do, and if there were twenty silver moons beginning to show in the sky instead of that one, he would go on at it all the same without even seeing them. I shall run down to the rescue. I won't have papa defrauded of his evening walk for any Englishman's pertinacity."

Ellen found it an easier task than she had expected to carry her point. She had many a time done battle with Mr. O'Roone for her father's company, and looked for a sufficiently long opposition to give her a pleasant sense of victory.

Mr. Thornley was a different sort of antagonist, however, from those she had been used to engage, and apparently did not think it worth while to waste words on her. He moved aside to let her take her father's arm when she came out on the terrace; but answered her merry appeal to him to give up this particular hour of her father's time with a silent bow only. Ellen, glancing up into his face in wonder at such a remarkable talent for silence, saw an expression of vexation and worry there that surprised her. How odd it was that this stranger should be so much more interested in her father's affairs than he was himself. She knew it must be some concerns of her father's that brought the look of care on his face, for she had learned from Lesbia what cause he had that day to be happy about his own good fortune. Well, if people could be miserable among mountains and lakes on a clear autumn evening, with the hunter's moon at full beginning to show in the sky, let them; only they must not be allowed to spoil the happiness of those for whom such things were joy enough. The most vexatious affairs will keep till daylight.

"Mr. Thornley," she said, gaily, "you shall not grudge my father and me this one hour together on our first day at home."

No direct answer. Mr. Thornley's eyes were fixed on Mr. Daly's face. "You must excuse me one moment longer," he said. "I am very much in earnest in this matter. I particularly wish to keep my appointment with this Dennis Malachy myself, and alone. It may be all a trick, as you say; but my own impression is different. I think something of importance will come out, and I should prefer to keep the appointment myself."

"Be easy, be easy; I have taken it on myself, and I

should prefer that just for this once you should trust to my understanding of the people I have known since they were boys being sounder than your own." Then, as Mr. Thornley hesitated and seemed about to speak again, Mr. Daly added, with one of the keen looks of authority that came now and then into his gay blue eyes, "The omission to keep your appointment with Dennis Malachy need scarcely trouble you, since you are leaving us all so soon."

It was almost equivalent to reminding him that his authority and interest in the affairs of the place were over, and that further persistence would be an interference. A slight colour rose in Mr. Thornley's cheeks, and Ellen was sorry for him. He was quicker to feel things, this wonderfully old-young man, than one would have supposed.

"You must let papa have his own way this once, Mr. Thornley, please," she said, kindly. "He is in my charge now. I shall make him tell me what he is going to do, and if it is anything wrong I'll scold him. I can do it a great deal better than you; now can I not, papa?"

It was impossible for gravity itself not to relax under the influence of Ellen's bright cordiality. John Thornley walked down to the gate with them, chatting pleasantly, and then turned back towards the house. Ellen gave a bound of joy when he was gone, and clasped her hands tight round her father's arm.

"Now I have you all to myself, here at last. Oh what joy! Does not everything look natural, as if we had never been away? Look, papa! there's Billy Tully's boat with the hole in the bottom in its old place under the hollow rock, where it was put to be mended years ago; and the coping stones that fell from the garden wall in the great storm are in their old places on the ground, only a little more moss-covered: and though that tree has grown higher, I can still catch a glimpse through it of the red gable of Matthew Burke's farmhouse's roof, that he began to cover with tiles and never finished. I feel as if I should like to run about to all the things and kiss them for having stood still in their places and not altered a shade since we left them. Is there any one in the world I wonder happier than I am this minute?"

"You love it all, then, you true Irishwoman—ruin and all? 'Let alone' is good enough for you, Eileen Bawn, eh?"

"Yes, if it makes people happy; and how happy they are to see you among them again!"

"They don't go in for improvements."

"Mr. Thornley has been making improvements—the wretch!"

"He has been trying hard, and flatters himself that by dint of pushing and pulling and dragging he has put a little motion into the old machine—given it a start along the road of progress; but now you see King Log has come back again the frogs will have a little peace, and escape crushing at all events."

"We did very well as we were, I think. I suppose we might be richer, and the cabins and farms, and the Castle too for that matter, might be in better order, and the people cleaner and more industrious and better off; but then, if we were, how discontented and miserable we should all be."

"I wish John Thornley were here to hear you, and sneer at your Irish logic—discontented and miserable because we were better off!"

"Papa, I meant it—it was not a bull; it is what I have observed. Once begin to worry about things going well and being in good order, and there is no end."

"True as the O'Flaherty witch herself could put it, my yellow-haired queen. Whereas, you see, to old boats, and half-roofed farmhouses, and copeless walls, and King Logs in the water, there is an end. Bit by bit we rot and crumble away, till there is nothing left of us. Are you prepared to face that position of things, you hater of improvements?"

"I don't truly mean that I hate anything but being kept away from you. Papa, I'll tell you a secret. It is great joy to get back to this place. You know what every stone of it is to one's heart, but it's the seeing you back here that I really care for. I never felt I had *you* all the time we were in England. I don't think it was *you* that lived in the doleful little house with us there; but now, by our own lake-side, I have you fast, and you won't shut your heart against me any more, or let there be any little corner full of troubles in your mind that I may not creep into to smooth them and fold them away, so that you will hardly know they are there. You always promised that when I grew up we would enter into partnership, and

now that you are well rid of Mr. Thornley I mean to take his place."

"So you shall, my darling, and we'll make the best of it as things stand; but if I were well out of the way, remember there's no one would be such a good friend or adviser for Pelham as this young Thornley. I am glad he has been here and learned so much; his help and advice might be useful again to Pelham when the time comes that he has to manage for himself and I am well out of the way."

"Papa, do you hear me? You are not to talk of being well out of the way when I am telling you that the only thing I care for on earth is to see you in it. Don't you think you and I together will be worth more than Pelham and Mr. Thornley? If we asked all the people around to choose, would not they shout out for us?"

"For King and Queen Log!—not a doubt of it. But then you see there is the rotting process to come afterwards."

"We are not going to rot. We will have our little improvements, and our plans too. My first is that we shall go on living precisely as we did before, only that in every way we shall be a little happier and a little better, and that never, never again shall you say sad words, or talk of being out of the way, when you and I are walking together in the moonlight, and I have your dear arm fast between my two hands."

"At least I promise never again to say anything to vex you, Eileen aroon. Now we have come to the steep bit of the hill, and it is time for you to run back to the house Connor is bringing my horse after me. I had better mount here, for I have a longish ride before me."

"You have not told me yet where you are going."

"I shall not come back to dinner. When I have finished my business I shall ride on to the Hollow, and stay the night with Anne O'Flaherty."

"How I wish you would take me with you! Good-bye. We must have a walk by the lake every night while this moon is full."

Ellen turned at the gate to wave her hand towards the tall figure on horseback standing sentinel on the white road till she should have entered the house. "How hand-

some he looks on his own horse!" she said to herself. "Every one would know who it is, even in the moonlight, and there will be glad hearts in the cabins as he passes, and welcoming faces peeping out. I wish I could follow with my eyes, and see him all the way to the Hollow."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts : who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best : his state
Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest :
They also serve who only stand and wait."

MILTON.

If the day had been Ellen's, the evening was Lesbia's.

When she came down stairs into the Castle Daly drawing-room, dressed for late dinner, with a string of seed pearls round her neck, which Bride had taken from the old cedar-wood jewel-case that had not previously been open since their mother's death, and presented to her in acknowledgment of her present right to wear jewels, Lesbia felt not only that she was tasting for the first time the sweets of her heiress-ship, but that she was claiming the more subtle rights of grown-up young lady and beauty-hood which, under the pressure of Aunt Joseph's judicious snubbing, she had hitherto only ventured to take to herself by stealth, and at long intervals.

She did not look vain or self-conscious, or even excited. She was only radiant with the wholesome youthful radiance that comes of eyes shining with happiness and white teeth gleaming through red lips parted in perpetual smiles.

Mrs. Daly, who had never hitherto bestowed much attention on the friend Ellen and Connor had picked up without introduction, looked at Lesbia Maynard now with surprised approval, and secretly wondered why her own daughter Ellen, who was not less well endowed with natural advantages, had never yet been able to assume the dainty, complete, well-appointed young lady look that seemed to have come in a moment to little Babette.

The Thornleys had brought habits of order and home comfort into the Castle Daly household that were very

pleasing to Mrs. Daly, and filled her with envy for Bride's powers of government.

After dinner, at Bride's suggestion, they all adjourned to the library instead of to the large, scantily-furnished drawing-room, where it seemed impossible for a small party to converse or follow any occupations comfortably. A bright wood and turf fire burned on the hearth, and a leaf of one of the long windows was open, letting in the soft moonlight and the scent of garden flowers. The old grand piano, on which Ellen used to play jigs and national airs out of time and tune to the torture of her mother's ears, had been brought from the drawing-room to the warmer library, and much improved by Bride's care and tuning. She sat down and played a long sonata tastefully and well, while the young people congregated by the open window talking and laughing. From her comfortable chair by the fireside Mrs. Daly noticed all the little improvements and niceties of arrangement that Bride had introduced into the room during her three years' occupancy of it. Ah! she thought to herself, she has been able to carry out her plans. She has contrived to train the servants under her to a degree of neatness and carefulness that I could never persuade them to practise for me. It is because she has had proper support from the man at the head of the house. The people under her have not felt as my servants did, that the sympathy of the master was on their side, and that he thought my particularity as tiresome as they did. I could have managed to organize an orderly house, such as I could have lived happily in, if I had been alone, or if Dermot had been different from what he is. It has been very hard on me. I should actually have done better if I had been alone. My husband has been no support to me.

This was a very ordinary train of thought with Mrs. Daly. She had spent a great many painful half-hours in her life, turning and turning similar thoughts over in her mind. They came and went; accustomed guests looking into her mind with every-day faces of gentle discontent, and going away again leaving no remorse behind. This one was welcomed and entertained as usual. She did not know what a terrible power of pain it was endued with, or that during the few quiet minutes while she communed

with it it was piercing her memory with a sting whose wound was never again to cease to ache.

When the crash with which Miss Thornley's musical study came to an end died away in the room, the conversation in the window grew audible enough to arrest Mrs. Daly's attention and break the train of her thoughts. It was Ellen's voice a little raised and eager that made itself heard first.

"But that is just what I hate," she was saying. "Sound reasoning is sure to be on the wrong side always. I just hate it."

"Thank you," Mr. Thornley answered, quickly. "You have quite satisfied me; there is an end of our discussion. You acknowledge that sound reason is on my side. Call it the wrong side after that as much as you please."

"No, no; you won't understand. I did not say reason. I said reasoning. I meant that the reasons that can be put into words are nearly always wrong. The right side has so much above, behind, all round, that cannot possibly be said."

"Is not that a little too ingenious a way of claiming to be always right in an argument, where appearances are against you?" said Mr. Thornley, smiling.

"It is what I shall always think."

"An encouraging prospect for me in future arguments; or is it a warning to keep out of them?"

"Oh, no! I like arguments, only remember, if you ever really mean to convince me on any point, you must be unreasonable. Then I shall perhaps think that there may be something worth listening to in what you are saying."

Mrs. Daly noticed a look of amusement, slightly contemptuous amusement, she thought, on Bride Thornley's face, now turned from the piano, and she hastened to put an end to her daughter's exposure of herself by summoning her to accompany her up stairs, and help her to get to bed.

It was growing late when Ellen left her mother's room, for Mrs. Daly was troubled with many nervous fears that were increased by her husband's absence, and Ellen had to make earnest promises of careful supervision as to the putting out of fires and locking of doors, before her mother could be persuaded to compose herself to rest.

The other members of the household had, however, not yet retired to their rooms. Ellen heard sounds from the library as she descended the stairs. Bride was again at the piano, and Lesbia and Pelham (the only musical member of the Daly family) were singing a German watch-song together. She would have to wait a few minutes longer, she found, before she could set out on her promised round of inspection through the house. She thought she would slip out into the garden, and look at the mountains, and breathe the fresh night air, till the song was ended; so throwing a cloak round her head, she ran down the front door steps on to the terrace. The moon was sinking in the west, but the night was not dark. Thousands of fiery lamps glowed overhead, and the lake shimmered a steely sheet of brightness, dotted with reflected points of light. There was a night-thrush singing in the bushes near the gate. Ellen stood still for a minute or two to catch the faint warble mingled with the last notes of Lesbia's song, "Good night, All's well, Good night"—the two voices joined in giving the refrain, distinct and sweet, and then ceased. She was turning to go in.

"Miss Eileen, whisht! For the love of God and His Blessed Mother I want a word wid you. One that's dying there without wants a word wid you for the love of God." These words, in a low hoarse whisper fell on Ellen's ear, and at the same moment a hand was laid on her shoulder from behind. She did not start or scream, for the cracked voice and trembling touch of the hand were familiar of old, and she was not surprised on turning round to find old Molly Malachy standing before her, shivering, shaking, and mumbling with some unusual emotion apparently, but looking a very natural object to be there.

"To-night, Molly?" Ellen exclaimed. "Do you want me to go down to the village to-night? Who is dying? Might not my visit wait till early in the morning? You shall go with-me to the house now, and get anything that may be wanted."

"It's you that's wanted, Miss Eileen—a word wid you. Shure his reverence has been sent for, and is on his way, and there's not a minute to lose; and oh, Miss Eileen, Miss Eileen, sore will be yer heart, every day that ye live

after, if ye don't do as I bid ye this miserable evening that's come to us all."

"Let me call Connor."

"It's yerself that's wanted, and nobody else, and there's not a minute to lose. For the love of God, come wid me now, avourneen macree."

The old woman had seized Ellen's arm by this time, and was dragging her towards the gate more rapidly than Ellen could have supposed such trembling limbs would have had power to move.

She trembled and shivered herself, but it was the thought of being taken all at once from the gay talk and every-day occupations of the evening into the awful presence of death. She had not the remotest thought of danger or distress to herself; and she was not very much surprised, as she had often seen Anne O'Flaherty hurried away with similar persistence, to receive some death-bed confidence or have some last request urged upon her. She had very little doubt that it was some favour or promise of protection from her father that was sought to be extorted from her by dying lips; and though compliance was painful, she had not the heart to refuse even as startling a request as this on the second evening of her return.

"Is it far, Molly? Is it quite at the other end of the village?" she whispered anxiously, when they had passed the gate and the first group of cottages on the roadside, and were approaching a more solitary spot, where a by-lane leading downhill towards a tract of bog-land opened from the village street. In the shadow of a wall a little distance down this lane stood an empty car, with a man wrapped in a loose frieze coat, leaning against the horse, his face hidden on his arm. Molly dropped Ellen's hand and ran towards the car, exchanged a word with the man, and then began vehemently signing to Ellen to follow her. Ellen hesitated an instant between fear and kindness, and then turned down into the darkness, a little perplexed and annoyed with Molly for this apparently unnecessary delay, but not seriously alarmed yet. A minute more, and a sickening pang of fear, taking away all power of resistance, came. The cloak she wore was suddenly drawn over her face by a hand she did not see, and she felt herself lifted up from the ground in a strong grasp and pushed on to the car, to

the seat of which other hands held her firmly, while the car set off down the steep road at a rapid pace. By the time she had recovered herself so far as to be able to drag the cloak from over her mouth and call for help, they had left the cabins some yards behind, and were plunging into the wild bog-land that lay to the west of the Castle. Her cries were stopped by a hand laid on her lips, and old Molly's cracked voice pierced the ringing in her ears.

"Whisht, Miss Eileen, whisht, or we'll have to put you down, and the last words that he's longing to speak to you will never be said. It's our bare lives we're risking, avourneen, to save ye the worst part of the heart-break that has to come upon you; and shure ye'll not hinder what we're willing to do for *him* for want of courage. Darling lady, is not yer heart warm enough wid love for your father to keep out the could fear?"

"My father!" cried Ellen. "Oh, Molly, no, no; nothing can ail him; no one will have hurt him. You would not dare to touch me if they had, and you knew it."

"We're risking our lives for him and you this minute. Whisht, then, it's an accident that's come to him, and the poor boys ran and called me whin they saw how it was, and I'm doing the best I can for him, the best they'll let me who have the power to hinder. And ye'll not be alone, avourneen; I'll stay wid ye, and his reverence will be there before daylight, for one's gone to warn him, braving all the danger that will follow. Bad luck to it all! for if he'd come that was expected, neither priest nor friend would have been needed."

"I don't understand—I don't understand," gasped Ellen. "Did you say papa wanted me, and that he was hurt? Why do we go so slowly? Why do you hold me? Let me get out and run."

"It's flying at the top of speed we are, darling; don't you hear the boy chirripping his horse wid all the voice that is not choked wid sorrow. There, lean against me, and cry yer heart out, and then ye'll be ready to sit out the hours wid a still face and help him."

Ellen had wept away the first blinding rush of tears, and the feverish agony of impatience to be doing something and to know the worst had returned before the car stopped; then Molly again drew the cloak forcibly over her face.

while the man who was driving jumped down from his seat, threw the reins on his horse's neck, and, lifting her from her place by Molly, carried her a few paces in his arms. She felt that he strode over some sort of fence, descended a step or two, there was the click of a latch, and she was placed on her feet within a door that had been pushed open far enough to admit her. The man had disappeared before she had thrown the cloak from her face, but she had no thought or observation to give to him. Outside there had been the faint light of a clear, moonless night, and the same glimmer of stars shone on the spot where she stood, for though it was inclosed between four walls, the roof was gone; but there was other light here as well as that of the stars. A lantern placed on a projection in the stone wall cast a broad streak of light along the mud floor, and, lying in the light, Ellen saw, and saw nothing else, her father's figure stretched out; the white face, raised a little by a heap of rags that had been thrust under the head, looked ghastly, and would have been death-like but for the frown of intense pain that contracted the brows. She could not restrain a bitter cry of agony as she threw herself by his side.

"Oh, papa, papa, what is it? Can't you look at me? Can't you speak to me?"

The frown of pain relaxed, the eyes opened and were raised to her face with the old look of love, and there was a movement of the lips as if to speak; but to Ellen's despair, instead of words, a thin stream of blood oozed from them and choked utterance.

"Whisht, thin, avourneen, whisht," whispered Molly, who now appeared out of the darkness close to Ellen's side; "don't make him spake a word yet, it's but a few that there's left for him to spake; let him keep the bit of breath that's in him to save his soul whin his reverence comes. There, sit down on the ground, and take his head in your lap. See, he likes that; the breath comes easier now you have his head up. He's smiling on you, his own sweet smile, sweeter than May flowers."

"A doctor," gasped Ellen. "Oh, Molly, leave me to sit with him alone—I can—and bring a doctor and help. Why did not you think of that first?"

"Would you put the body, that must anyway be stiff

and could by morning, before the soul, that has got to live in heaven or hell for ever?" cried Molly, indignantly. "Shure, for what he has done for me and mine, on my bended knees I begged his soul of them that were in sore dismay at the misfortune that had happened, but had their own lives to think of; and I got leave to bring a priest here if he was alive in the early morning, and I brought you of my own will—but it was all I dare do."

"Mamma and Connor——"

"Whisht! whisht! look what you have done," said Molly, pointing to the pale face, over which a quiver of pain passed at Ellen's words. "I brought you to whisper holy words into his ear, and help him to die aisy. I thought ye'd have the courage, and be woman enough to know how, loving him as you do."

"What can I do! oh, what can I do to make him suffer less!"

"Wet his lips wid that," said Molly, putting a small bottle of whisky into her hand, "and maybe he'll open his eyes and smile at you again."

Ellen did as she was directed, and then with her handkerchief wiped the brows, on which the damp of death had already settled, and raised the head till it rested on her shoulder. The power of swallowing was gone, but the moisture to the lips seemed to bring refreshment, and Ellen repeated the operation again and again, finding some relief for her own extreme anguish of mind in having this little service to perform. She wore a small ivory cross on her neck that night, which Cousin Anne had given her on a long-past birthday: in stooping to wet her father's lips the ribbon that fastened it became loose, and it slipped down close to his hand; his fingers closed feebly over it, and he smiled. It was more than a smile; he was murmuring some words low. Ellen put her ear close to catch them. "Dying for another, instead of another—it is well. Something worthy at the end of a careless life. In one thing—only in one thing, like Him." Here breath failed, and there was a few minutes of very painful gasping; but he had seen that Ellen was listening, and he made a great effort to go on; and now with more connection in his words. "Remember I die forgiving. Tell Pelham and Connor so. It was not meant for me, but I deserve it.

King Log—Well, out of the way. Tell John Thornley I am glad I did not let him come here to-night. It was my place, not his." The sentences came out slowly, with long pauses between, but Ellen thought the voice grew stronger instead of weaker, and that a look of more perfect consciousness and an expression of peace grew into the face. "If you should ever see him anywhere—it is not likely, but if you should—tell him I forgave him my death. It was through my neglect he was tempted, and that I was glad it was not as he intended—it would have been a greater crime."

"Him! do you mean the man who did this?" said Ellen, shuddering inexpressibly—"you know who?"

There was no answer, only a smile; something like one of the old playful smiles that used to come when Ellen tried to coax some piece of news from her father, and he pretended to be unwilling to trust her. Then, after a long pause—

"Your mother will be happier with Pelham. Love is not always enough—but I'll be missed too."

In these alternate pauses and gasps of speech and of intense listening, an hour or two of the night passed. Old Molly sank on her knees in a corner of the cabin, and began to tell her beads rapidly, in a loud voice.

"To keep off the evil spirits that were trying to come in and battle for the soul of the dying," she whispered to Ellen, who would have trembled at the thought at another time, but who had no space in her mind for anything but grief then.

The stars one after another, in their march across the sky, looked through the rafters of the uncovered roof on to the group below. It seemed to Ellen, as her eye, raised now and then, followed their motions, as if she had fallen into some strange relations towards them, and was moving with them in hitherto unknown conditions of time through interminable periods. Millions of years, was it not—had she not read about it somewhere?—that they took to perform their vast circling round some unknown centre? She had got involved in it somehow, and was living through a millennium of darkness, instead of a common night on which an ordinary day could dawn.

It grew intensely cold; a brisk wind rose, and blew chill and sharp through the hovel.

Molly rose from her knees, wrapped her old cloak round the dying man, and taking his feet into her lap, began to chafe his lower limbs.

"It's only his feet that are stone could yet," she said; "and the dawn is breaking, and wid the dawn the help they promised will come—the best of help—his reverence and the Blessed Sacrament. Avourneen, we have saved his soul betwixt us, you and I, to-night, keeping him alive for that; and once the sun has fairly risen, I'm free of my oath, and can bring who you will. He's muttering to himself now, and does not heed us, but there's life in him yet, and he'll come to himself again before he dies. A strong, well-made man, like his honour, takes a long time to die, even when he's got a bullet inside him; bad luck to the blundering hand that put it there."

Gradually the stars paled in the sky, the shadows in the far corners of the cabin dispersed, and daylight crept in. Mr. Daly seemed to be sinking into a heavy sleep, and Ellen began to urge Molly to set out to the Castle to bring help—declaring her ability to continue the solemn watch alone—when the long-listened-for sound of steps, and of a voice calling out to know if the shieling was inhabited, came at last. It seemed to bring Ellen back into the actual world, and break the numbing spell of horror and bewilderment that had held her all night; but with returning capacity for thought and comprehension of what had happened came still worse pain. It was not a vision or a nightmare; she was not dead among the stars; she was herself, and her murdered father lay in her arms dying. A great burst of tears came and saved her reason, and as the warm drops fell heavy on his forehead, Mr. Daly's eyes opened again, and consciousness and a look of eager welcome and relief dawned into them as they fell upon the priest whom Molly was now bringing in through the cabin door.

Ellen knew the priest's face, though he came from a distant village among the Joice mountains, for she had met him from time to time at Anne O'Flaherty's house, and she took his hand, and through her tears and sobs got out a few words of explanation. He told her that he had been roused at two o'clock in the morning by a lad bringing a request that he would go to the solitary cabin, near the

bog behind Castle Daly, to administer extreme unction to a person who lay dying there, and that he had come at once expecting to find some wandering beggar who had fallen ill, while sheltering temporarily in the deserted house. Mr. Daly's eyes grew impatient, even while these few sentences were exchanged. There was no time to lose, and the priest only waited to despatch the boy who had accompanied him to the nearest place from which a doctor could be brought, and Molly to the Castle, and then the last service began; Ellen still supporting her father's head on her shoulder, and trying hard not to let her sobs shake her so as to make it an uneasy resting-place. For a little while the holy rite seemed to lift her above the power of sorrow, as if she too stood on the verge, and was entering on conditions of communion which could not be disturbed by absence of bodily sight and touch. Surely, her soul would pass out too, into the unseen world, brought near by the sacramental presence of the One Lord, in whom all souls live. She could not be left behind now the door was open, but must somehow escape, involved in the parting soul to which every fibre of her heart was bound.

She hoped; but that exaltation had to pass, and the hope soon sank down into a mere dread of the time when her shoulder would no longer feel the weight of the burden that grew heavier every moment, when the close contact would be over, and her arms empty.

The final pang was further off than was probable just then, for Molly was right, and it took a long time for the strong man to die. The hovel became crowded with faces as the morning grew older. The first to arrive were Mr. Thornley and Bride, for Connor had gone off on a fishing expedition at day-dawn, and Pelham stayed to comfort his mother, whom they had not dared to bring to the scene of the accident, till some more reliable account of Mr. Daly's state had been received than could be extracted from Molly. As soon as it was ascertained that any attempt to move the sufferer would only hasten his end, Bride went back to the Castle to fetch Mrs. Daly, and there was half an hour when Ellen and Mr. Thornley shared the watch alone together. It was the half-hour when Mr. Daly was most frequently conscious and able to say a word, and Ellen could not help half grudging that a

stranger, who could not care, should share the precious looks and faintly-breathed-words with her. Yet, she could not deny that the moment of clearest consciousness, the most firmly spoken words and the very sweetest smile that came were called forth by the pleasure her father seemed to feel when he first perceived that Mr. Thornley was near him. His eyes rested vaguely on his face for a moment or two, not recognizing him ; but gradually recollection came, and with it a sudden light illumined all the dying face. A halo of glory Ellen thought it was, and always in memory she saw her father dying with that look of joy in his eyes. He made a sign to John Thornley to come near. Ellen bent down to listen too ; she could not afford to lose a word.

"You see it was well I came here last night instead of you."

A quiver of strong emotion passed over John Thornley's face.

"I see it saved my life," he said, in a voice trembling with feeling. "This was meant for me. You are lying here instead of me."

"A very good exchange," said Mr. Daly, smiling. "I never did think myself worth much ; you have all your chances before you."

"But if you thought there was danger, why did you come here alone ?"

"At least, I was never a coward. I have done a great deal of harm, and neglected my duties, as Anne O'Flaherty has often told me, but at least I am not a coward to let another person bear the consequences."

"You seem to be able to speak with less pain now," John Thornley went on more calmly. "Don't let us lose the precious moments. Have you not any deposition to make that might lead to the identification of the murderers ? So horrible a crime must not, shall not, I promise you, escape detection and punishment."

"Crime never does ; the punishment comes over and over again. Seed and fruit,—my own neglects and follies."

The peaceful face had become suddenly troubled, and again the words came out with painful gasps and struggles. Mr. Thornley bent lower to catch any name that might be spoken. "A single word would do," he urged. "If you know anything, don't let the knowledge die with you."

The lips moved again, and some words came, but they were not in answer to the question.

"My sons—Pelham—you could help."

"I shall always feel that my life's service is owed to those you leave behind you," John Thornley answered; and he bent down and solemnly touched the dying man's forehead with his lips.

"Don't make him speak again," Ellen cried, almost angrily. "Don't you see that every word hurts? He was suffering less a minute ago. Why did you come near? Why could not you let him lie still with his eyes shut, as he was doing before you came?"

John rose from his knees by Mr. Daly's side, and for answer went and stood behind Ellen and began to pile up some cushions and shawls, which Bride had brought, into a support for her to lean against as she sat. "You must not grudge me those few words, that one touch," he said, softly. "I will not come near again to disturb him unless he wants me. You are fortunate, you have been here with him all night, while we slept."

Fortunate. The word pleased Ellen; she rewarded it by raising her eyes to the speaker's face, and allowing to herself that it was genuine grief, such as she must admit to her sympathy, that was written there.

New-comers kept appearing at the low door. Mrs. Daly and Pelham, and a little later Connor arrived, accompanied by a doctor. Every moment seemed to add something to the tumult of grief that surged round the dying bed, but which seemed to have less and less power to reach the soul hovering on the confines of peace; only able to turn back now and then and look pityingly through the fast glazing eyes at the pain it was leaving behind.

The last word and look were for Anne O'Flaherty, who reached the cabin half an hour before the end. Mrs. Daly, shaken completely out of her usual composure, and seeming for once to have changed places with Ellen, who had no vehemence of grief that day, had thrown herself on the floor by her husband's side, and was weeping wildly, begging for one more look or word of love. His hand moved feebly, and drew her head close to his own on the pillow, and opening his eyes once more he looked at Anne, — he was stooping over him, with a smile of triumph.

"She does love me, you see, Anne; *me* who never satisfied her. She loved me after all."

A few more words were murmured very low to himself a quarter of an hour afterwards. Anne bent low to catch the sounds, and, raising her head, repeated the words calmly and gravely to the others.

"Satisfied! When we awake in Thy likeness we shall be satisfied with it."

Then John Thornley came and lifted the head with gentle force from Ellen's shoulder.

"We can take him home to the Castle now," he said. "It will not hurt him."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Then strive more gladly to fulfil
Thy little part. This darkness still
Is light to every loving will.
And trust—as if already plain—
How just thy share of loss and pain
Is for another's fuller gain."—A. A. PROCTOR.

WHEN a sudden calamity falls upon some members of a group of persons whom circumstances have thrown together, it is curious to see how one or two of the outsiders seem by general consent of the mourners to be taken at once into the fellowship of sorrow, while others, who are conscious perhaps of having within themselves as strong a yearning to offer sympathy and help, are persistently held aloof, and made to feel that they have neither part nor lot in the matter. Is it accident, or has character anything to do with the choice of who shall and who shall not be allowed to offer consolation? Bride Thornley made this observation, and asked this question, rather sorrowfully, of herself two days after Mr. Daly's funeral, as, taking advantage of a short gleam in a very rainy day, she was taking her constitutional walk up and down the terrace before Castle Daly.

Never in all her life had she felt so utterly lonely and left out as during the painful week she was looking back upon. And this as the result of her sister's return home and of John's having attained one of the wishes which he

and she had put before themselves as a possibility to be worked towards ten years back. Is there any use in wishing, since the longed-for good always comes wearing such a different face from the one it has shown in the distance that one hardly recognizes it? Bride caught herself up sternly when the thankless sentence had distinctly formed itself in her mind. What was wrong with her? Had she grown mean and base all at once, to let a little sting of personal pain overpower her sympathy with the grief she saw around her? Ah! Here was the answer to her puzzle. No wonder the mourners had held aloof from her when, side by side with real concern for their sufferings, lay the half-formed grudge she was conscious of against John and little Lesbia, for that complete pre-occupation in the troubles of their friends, which made a word or look from them hard to obtain in these days.

Yes; it was base. What did a week's loneliness signify? Why could she not put herself completely out of count—the plain, stiff, unlovable self that just in this mood there was so much pleasure in abusing—and be glad because John for once had had occasion to show the rare unselfishness and tenderness of his character to others besides herself; and because little Babette had won him through her sympathy in the general trouble to adopt her as a real companion, in spite of her childishness? It was certainly very base not to be glad of that. Why should not John have two close friends in his sisters instead of one? Why not, indeed?

A gust of rainy wind blew in Bride's face as she walked. She drew her cloak close round and marched quickly on, trampling on herself in imagination, and treading down rebellious thoughts vigorously at every step. The front door opened, and two other figures appeared on the scene to share Bride's pacing place: Sir Charles Pelham, his rosy face composed into a mask of gravity that had yet something important and business-like in the look of it; and, leaning feebly on his arm, Ellen Daly. She had been very ill since the night of her father's death, quite confined to her bed; but there had been much anxious discussion that day during luncheon, in which Sir Charles Pelham, his son Marmaduke, Lesbia, and John had all eagerly joined, as to whether it would be possible to coax her out of doors

that afternoon—a long, over-eager discussion Bride had called it within herself at the time, and now (having had that impatient feeling in her heart) she somehow did not feel just in the mood to encounter a full look into Ellen's saddened face. She turned aside to let the pair pass her on the walk, and looked back towards the house.

Well, there was no lack of anxious eyes to watch the progress of that invalid promenade, if she abstained from looking. The front door had been left ajar, and in the opening stood Marmaduke Pelham gazing intently after his father and cousin, as if he were counting every one of their slow steps. Bride understood the wistful, yearning look that lent something of pathos to the young man's heavy, healthy countenance.

"He hoped she would choose his arm for her support during that first walk," Bride said to herself. "Poor fellow; he is very dull; but he knows what it is to be overlooked, I see. I should like to shake hands with him; but why does he draw in suddenly and shut the door with a bang? Ah! I comprehend—he sees and hears as I do, the library window opening cautiously, and John putting out his head to look towards the end of the terrace too. What does he expect to happen to those two that he should watch them like that? Surely one old uncle is competent to take care of a girl walking before her own house; let her have lost her father in ever so shocking a way a week before; two other people are not needed to watch her as well."

If Ellen Daly's sad face was a jar on Bride Thornley's mood, John's anxious one was a yet greater provocation. She could not bear it. She turned abruptly at the end of the house, scrambled up hill, over soaked turf and flower-border, till she reached the high turf terrace at the top of the sloping garden. There, at all events, she should be alone; and yes, for once, just for once, the grudging, self-pitying thoughts should have their turn, and get themselves expressed—so perhaps she should best see how ugly they were, and discover a spell to lay them for ever at rest.

Of course all pity was due to Mrs. Daly and Ellen; they were the sufferers—and yet—and yet—there are so many sorts of loss; it is not only death that takes away one's

dearest, and leaves one standing alone. There are other shears beside the shears of the blind Fate severing lives that have been closely knit together; and the severing is done so noiselessly, so gently, there must not be a word said—nor the least little cry. Surely the losses that can't be complained of are the hardest to bear. No warmth of sympathy comes to put a little fresh life in the numb, frozen heart; it may turn quite to ice for what any one cares. It is so mean to grieve over the loss of the first place in a heart to which one has only the right of having paid away irrevocably all one's own. It was simply what was to be expected; and a middle-aged, plain, unattractive woman, who has been struggling with the world for years, ought to have won reasonable expectations as to her own claims by her struggles, if she has gained nothing else; humility and plain sense at least may be expected of her. It is not even called fortitude, if she stands still with a smiling face, while one by one of those to whom she has given all her love and her life-work gradually take themselves away, to stand a little and a little further off from her, till the space is too great for any warmth of love to pass between.

Yet surely people might know that it is not so much less hard to see those you love best shut themselves away in a new sphere of interest, and a kind of love to which you are strange, than to see the golden gate of heaven close behind them. The door is shut all the same; and it does not do you much good to be near enough to hear the sound of the festival songs and see the light of the lamps streaming through, while you are standing outside. Tears of self-pity welled up into Bride's eyes as the thoughts to which she had so long refused to listen clothed themselves in pathetic words, and one trickled down, at last, the length of her cheek. She had to stand still to wipe it away, and, with the action, a sense of absurdity stole in and shattered the sentimental mood.

The wet cheek wrinkled up into a smile. To cry about herself, plain, middle-aged Bride Thornley, prosperous now, healthy, content, whose life, rightly looked at had not a rag of pathos to hang round it;—she could have beaten herself for being so absurd. So much for taking a constitutional walk alone, when one has been overwrought,

and when there is an atmosphere of infectious emotion pervading the neighbourhood! She would go in and sew a white tucker into Lesbia's new black dress, and put jet studs into John's shirt, ready for the evening. When she had done working for those two, no doubt some other work would open up, and with work of any kind, say it was scrubbing floors or hemming dusters, self-pitying moods might be defied.

At the end of the terrace, however, she paused again. She found she was not ready for the house just yet. It was all very well to reason so, but work was not enough. The most congenial work in the world might become husks such as the swine eat, if offered to the heart as a substitute for what the heart craved. It was mind-food, not heart-food, after all. Bride's heart had been stirred and swayed from its usual poise of calm content, and it needed something more potent than ordinary common-sense lessons to still its yearnings.

In spite of wet feet and soaked skirts she stood quite still on the verge of the turf-walk, with her face towards the western mountains, unable to make up her mind to descend the slope. There had come a lull in the wind and the rain; a strong gust had lately shaken the trees of the little wood to the north of the Castle, and they were now swaying themselves to rest again, with crisp, pattering sounds of trembling leaves, and groaning of branches—a great cloud, like a dusky, wide-winged bird, was moving rapidly across the sky, leaving the mountain-tops from which it had lately risen clear against a horizon where the crimson of sunset glowed through a dim opal cloud-veil. These sights and sounds had a powerful effect on Bride, who, in spite of her pretensions to be prosaic, had an open eye and ear for the mystic appeals of nature.

As she gazed, she felt as if from the glowing west strong arms had been stretched out, that folded her round and held her to a great heart, whose deep beatings rocked hers to a wonderful peace; and, borne in on her mind as powerfully as if the sobbing wind in her ear had whispered the words, came the sacred appeal that had often touched her before, but never so closely, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." "I am chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely,"—in the wind, but not the wind—in the

sunset glow,—in the murmuring of waters,—but above, beneath, within, nearer and closer than these—He was there, the still, small voice, claiming her heart. And she had been pitying herself, instead of blaming herself, because her heart felt empty, while He stood without. She had been measuring love, so much for so much, and forgetting that there was Infinite Love offered to her Love that could never fail or change. Again tears, but not of self-pity this time, welled up into Bride's eyes, and she turned round and once more paced the turf-walk slowly. She would not cheat herself; unpaid service was not good for anyone, nor unrequited love; and work for work's sake was poor husky nourishment for a living, craving soul; but then, that was not all that was left for those to whom the closest human love was denied.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

She was ready for the house now, she believed, and for any news that had to come.

By the time she reached the terrace steps, she spied John coming from the house to meet her, and she knew perfectly well how it was that the word *news* had come into her mind. There had been a vague notion hanging over her all day, that some tidings were in store for her, and now the purpose of opening out some important communication was so plainly written in John's face, that she read it a yard off. Well, she was ready, only she thought she would put off the evil day for half an hour or so if she could.

"I am going into the house now," she cried, as John approached. "I warn you, you will find the turf-walk very wet."

"Can't you stay out a little longer, Bride? I have not been able to exchange a word with you for more than a week."

"Look at my boots."

"Brisk walking will dry them; and you say yourself that nothing ever gives you cold."

"I don't think I meant to include wet boots; but I see you are of Connor Daly's opinion, that I am as hard as nails."

"What business had he to say so? But, Bride, go in and change your boots, if you like. I can wait; and I want very much to have some talk with you."

"And I am ready for a talk, wet or dry, only I won't go back to the turf-walk for anyone."

"Let us come out on to the road; then, through the kitchen garden; it is dry enough there."

"Why through the kitchen garden?"

"Miss Daly and Sir Charles Pelham are still on the front terrace, and I should not like to disturb them."

"And that other pair in the flower-garden—are we not to disturb them? Do you see, John, Babette and Connor Daly? I wonder how long they have been down there looking for violets. Long enough, I have no doubt, to make it only prudent for me to go and act chaperone."

"No, no; Babette has only just left the house. She and I have been together the whole afternoon. Come with me; you need not interfere. I should think we might trust even Connor Daly not to begin talking nonsense to Babette the day after his father's funeral."

"But it is not the day after Babette's father's funeral, and I am not sure that I can trust her not to talk nonsense to him on such an interesting occasion as a first walk after a week of gloom. No, don't start. I am not saying any harm of her; but can't you see that she is just one of those girls who never forget, or let other people forget, that they are girls, and in the very nature of things require nonsense to be talked to or by them?"

"I think you underrate Lesbia. It strikes me that she has shown remarkable good sense and feeling during this last trying week; and this afternoon she came to me of her own accord, and consulted me about a plan for the future she has thought out with considerable clearness and prudence, as it seems to me."

"Oh, she came to you about it! It is her plan you have been discussing together?"

"Of course; you don't suppose that if I made a plan I should go and talk it over with little Babette before I mentioned it to you. Why, Bride, I thought you were miles above suspicion, and would never imagine such a thing as that I could put you aside, such old partners as we are, you and I."

"Well, well; whatever I may have been thinking, don't stand still and stare at me in the middle of this swamp. One look such as that is punishment enough for all my

sins. Let us move on towards the road ; and tell me this wonderfully clever plan of Lesbia's."

"Remember that you have a veto on it, and that if you seriously object we both submit at once."

"Honestly."

"Speaking of myself, I should be sorry to give up the scheme now that it has been suggested to me, and I see through it a way opened of fulfilling an obligation that weighs on me ; but your wishes come first ; new obligations don't unloose old ones. We have fought a hard battle together, you and I, Bride ; and not for the world, not for any new duty in the world, would I even seem to throw you over, or detach myself from you, now we are beginning to win it."

"John, you force me to be magnanimous. Here and now I yield for ever an old point of dispute. I solemnly acknowledge that men are juster than women ; and that they can, the good ones, even under the impulse of a new feeling, see how things look to those who don't share their infatuation."

"But, Bride, I said nothing about a new feeling. I spoke of a new duty that quite against my will has been thrust upon me."

"Oh, yes, I heard ; but now the plan. Let me hear the plan, and when my mind is set at rest about that, we will, if there is time before dressing for dinner, take out our microscopes and our scalpels and dissect our motives scientifically."

"Well, you are aware that Mr. Daly's will was read yesterday morning, and that all the afternoon and evening Sir Charles Pelham—who is Mrs. Daly's trustee—and the sons and I were hard at work examining papers and discussing possibilities. It was a disheartening task enough, for the affairs are even in worse confusion than might have been expected ; and when I went to bed last night I could not see that there was anything left for the family but separation, and dependence on the generosity of their relations, for a time at least. We have gone through such another crisis, Bride, and know what it means."

"Yes, yes ; and I am sure I feel very much for them all ; but I don't believe they can be nearly as badly off as we were when we were turned out of Abbots Thornley.

The sons are both grown up and educated in a way, and surely Mrs. Daly had some fortune settled on her?"

"A very small sum. You are right to say that the sons are educated *in a way*. Just enough to make it impossible for them to begin afresh and turn to anything useful."

"It is very sad, and, as you say, we have gone through it all ourselves; but, John, don't think me hard-hearted if I remind you that you have often said you believed we came through as well as we did because from the first no illusive offers of help were held out to us by anyone, and we knew at once all we had to face, and that our dependence must be on ourselves and each other."

"We two have come through the trial, but not all of us who went in; there were shipwrecks, you know, on that sea."

"Oh, John, don't; it's like touching a wound."

"I know, and I am very sorry. Only if we are to understand each other, I must show you all that is in my mind."

"Go on; I don't have to find out now that your heart is really softer than mine. Can't I have the plan without any more preamble?"

"It is just this—Lesbia's idea, mind you, not mine. She tells me that she has taken a very great liking to this house and neighbourhood."

"Where your life has been twice attempted. She has not lived a winter here."

"The winters are pleasant and open enough, and Lesbia professes a great love for fine scenery."

"Or fine compliments, *a la* Connor Daly. I wonder which the child means?"

"She says scenery, at all events. Let me get on with my story. She has asked me, since she must have some settled home of her own now, to rent this place of the Dalys. It is perfectly clear that they can't go on living here; but there is another house on the estate—a small place up among the hills—which Mrs. Daly and her daughter seem to wish to occupy; and if we took the Castle off their hands, they could all live there together in tolerable comfort. Connor would be able to finish his college course in Dublin, and read for the bar, as he wishes; and the eldest son, who seems a sensible fellow, might take the management of the estate into his own hands. His

uncle hinted that he should not object to advance a little money to keep things together if I were willing to remain on the spot a few months longer, and superintend till Pelham gained experience. Under this arrangement the debts might be paid off gradually, and affairs worked into order. What do you say?"

"I say it is an excellent plan for the Dalys."

"And for ourselves."

"Oh! John, can you really mean it? To sink down into a land-agent again. To give up the editorship of that 'New Quarterly,' and the literary career we have looked forward to so long."

"I should not give up the editorship. I am not so Quixotic as to throw away seven or eight hundred a year for a whim, I assure you. Most of the work would be as well done here as in London, and I could run up to town every two months or so. Lesbia will want to be there, I suppose, for part of the spring. It would all fit in very well."

"But why should you work yourself to death for people who a little while ago treated you as only rather better than an upper servant, and who, as far as I can see, are nothing to us?"

"Bride, I think I can make you see further. Have you never thought of it? No, for you did not know how obstinately set I was on keeping my appointment with Dennis Malachy that night, and how steadily resolved Mr. Daly was to go in my stead. It was to his death he went; and you know that shot from behind the wall was meant for me. Can I help feeling that some of the cares and responsibilities of the man who died in my place have fallen on me?"

"I don't know, I am sure—it was not his intention to die."

"I am not a man to take a sentimental view of obligation; but it is impossible to live through such a night as that of Mr. Daly's death without being changed by it. There was a look on his face when he fixed his eyes on me, and said, 'You see it was well I had my way about coming here,' that I shall carry in my memory to my dying day, and after. He meant quite simply, that it was *well* he should be murdered instead of me. I believe the thought

made death sweet to him. I used to look upon him as a sort of fool, and now——”

John did not finish his sentence ; a quiver in his voice warned him to stop. The road began to be steep here. Bride slipped her hand under his arm, and they climbed on a few minutes in silence. She felt as if a prison wall were closing round her. To live on here, with the Dalys for nearest neighbours, seeing John and Lesbia gradually getting absorbed into their lives, hearing about them continually, breathing the atmosphere of devout preoccupation with their interests, that had roused her jealousy this last week. No prospect could possibly have promised her more temptation or pain, or been more completely distasteful. She would have to acquiesce in it, she knew, but she could not help making one more faint struggle before she gave in.

“Granting that this plan is right for you and me, John” she said, “is it well for Lesbia to be indulged in her wish to remain here? When you first heard of her heiress-ship, you said the one thing you would most anxiously guard against was her being married for her money. How will you answer it to your conscience to put her in the way of intimacy with those two penniless, handsome young Dalys?”

“Lesbia has a great deal more judgment than I gave her credit for at first, and she is very open. She has told me already exactly what she thinks of Connor Daly, and I can see she is in no more danger of falling in love with him than you are. As for the elder lad, the very handsome one, he and she don't get on together at all. They seem hardly to be on speaking terms. I have watched them closely, and I don't think they have exchanged a dozen words this week. No, I shall not have the least uneasiness on that score. I do not see any difficulty there.”

“Of course you don't, just because it is the obvious rock in the way, and straight before your blind masculine eyes,” thought Bride to herself.

John paused as they turned to go home, and pointed to a particular spot on the road. “It was just there that I saw Mr. Daly last,” he said ; “he was mounting his horse for that ride. Miss Daly was standing at the gate to watch him ride away. I heard her ask him to walk with her

every night of the full moon. We two were the last people to see him before the accident."

"*We* two," already in his thoughts, and for so long it had seemed a mere matter of course to Bride that no one but herself could be the second in John's *we*. The walls were closing round indeed, and her consent to be shut up in them would have to be given in a minute or two.

"You are very silent, Bride," John said as they drew near the house. "I have stated my case, and you have hardly spoken a word; but remember, the decision rests with you. Say that the plan of living here is disagreeable to you, and it shall never be mentioned again. I have told you why I think these people have a claim on me for service, but you come first. Lesbia sees it too. After all you did and were to us in our struggling days, the choice of our home, now that we are free to live where we please, should rest with you."

"To live among people who hate us," Bride said slowly, at last.

"Yes, take that into consideration. I want you to weigh all the disadvantages fairly. Yet, I don't think that objection counts for much. We should live the prejudice down, and for my part, I think 'beginning with a little aversion,' answers as well with neighbours as with lovers. One has a pleasant sense of victory and triumph over them when one has won their respect at last."

"John, what makes you so ingenious?"

"Bride, what makes you so silent? Are you reluctant to decide, dear, and had you rather I divined your decision without more words? I think I see. It shall be 'No' to Lesbia's plan, then, and without further allusion to it we will revert to our original scheme of a year's travel before we settle anywhere. We used to talk of seeing Rome together, when it seemed as likely as going to the moon. I will speak to Lesbia."

Bride drew a long breath. If it could be settled so. If she might but stretch out her hand and take the pleasant life, far away from the country that was hateful to her, with John and Lesbia, her own brother, her own little sister, for whose sake she had done some hard work in her time, securely withdrawn from the adverse influence she believed was stealing them away from herself. If she

might love her own life, and choose her own good, and let other people carry their proper burdens as she had had to carry hers. Why not? Was there never to be an end? had she not done and suffered a good deal for others already? Was it not time to think of herself?

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. I with the crown of thorns, with the wounded hands and feet, the Lord and King of sacrifice. Open, and I will come in and sup with you."

Again, in the whisper of the wind among the trees, the low voice seemed to question with Bride's heart. Yes, it was just that—that *was* the question. He was there waiting for an answer. One could not entertain Him without following Him, or have self-pleasing for a third at that feast. Self, or Him—one ruler or the other—and again and again in one's life the choice has to be made. They were close to the Castle now. While John stooped to unlatch the garden gate, Bride took a long look, a long considering look at the building before her. Its straggling front, with the ivy-grown towers and irregularly-shaped doors and windows, the neglected premises behind, the rambling untidy garden: all intensely unhomelike in her eyes, but from that moment her home. She swallowed the bitter potion with a gulp, resolving never to allow herself to find its after-taste bitter.

"John," she said, putting her hand on his shoulder, as he held open the gate for her, "you misunderstood me. I was only making up my mind slowly, as you know I do. I have looked at it all round, and if I really have a veto, decide on staying here. There is a great deal to be said in favour of Lesbia's plan."

"You really think so! My dear Bride, how glad I am."

It was provoking to see how his face brightened. Bride hurried up the walk, and, to escape further conversation, set herself vigorously to work to rub the mud from her boots on the door-mat, as if she could think of nothing further till she had obliterated all trace of her wet walk from her person.

"It's of no use," she said to herself as she worked away; "I don't come into the house the same person that I went out. I know it's a turning-point, and that I shall never be able to forget this wet walk as long as I live. In it I

have turned a leaf in my book of life, and I can't put back the page. Whatever the new reading is, I've got from this time to begin to spell it out."

There were other people in Castle Daly that day besides Bride Thornley who always had to look back upon that wet afternoon's walk as one of those turning-points in life—places where two roads meet—which in after hours tempt the thoughts so often to recur to them in vague wonder as to how it would have been with the life if the rejected path had been followed.

Ellen and Sir Charles Pelham entered the house a minute or two after Bride quitted the hall, having also come to the conclusion of a conversation that decided the principal events of several lives. Ellen crept up-stairs wearily, looking very pale and subdued; and Sir Charles's ruddy face, as he turned into the library and stood warming his hands over the fire, wore an unusually thoughtful, puzzled expression. He was busy making up his mind whether he was most annoyed or gratified at the result of a step he had taken on a sudden good-natured impulse, aroused by the pitifully red and swollen state of Ellen's eyelids.

"Well, Marmaduke, my boy," he said to his son, who entered the room in the midst of his musing, "so you've come in; I was just thinking about you, and wishing for a chance of speaking to you alone. I've had it all out with your cousin Ellen. I thought it best, for you know there's nothing so wearing as suspense, and she seemed so down-hearted and miserable, poor girl, I thought it would cheer her to know there was a better prospect before her than she had any right to expect."

"You don't mean to say, father, that you've been talking to Ellen about what I confided to you last night? Why, I've never said a word of the kind myself to her yet."

"I was paving the way for you, and very grateful you ought to be to me for it, knowing as you do the opinions I hold against cousins marrying, and the little inclination I have to this match; there are not many fathers who would have set about such a piece of business for their eldest sons, I can tell you."

"She listened to what you said? you think I have a chance?"

"Of course she listened to me, and though you may fancy I have not the matter as deeply at heart as yourself, you may rest assured that if she can't be induced to see your offer in the light you could wish, it is not for the want of having had its advantages placed before her. 'My dear,' I said, 'Marmaduke surprised me very much yesterday after the funeral by speaking to me about the affection he says he has long entertained for you,' and then I went on. Of course, I did not pretend that it was precisely the match that your mother and I should have chosen for you, being cousins, and so on, but nothing could be kinder or more encouraging than my manner to her. 'We are all very fond of you, my dear,' I said, 'and we would give you a cordial welcome into the family, and do our best to make you happy, and take good care of you. You know you are not exactly fit to take care of yourself,' I said; 'you are unfortunately like your poor dear father, too full of generous feeling to be able to cope with the world;' and then, to prove my point, I just instanced her imprudence in going out with those people on the night of her father's murder, and her impulsive manner at the inquest, which has set everyone in the neighbourhood talking of her, when she came forward a second time to give evidence in favour of the old hag whom everyone but herself believes to be in league with the murderers, and who is, at all events, doing all she can to shield them from justice now. 'Of course,' I said, 'neither I nor any of my family would think for an instant of accusing you of want of proper feeling. I only speak of these things to show you how liable you are to be misconstrued when you follow your quick impulses without consulting anyone, and how much better off you will be under the guidance of a sensible, kind-hearted husband, such as Marmaduke will make you, who has known you all your life, and will understand better than anyone else can how to take care of you.'"

"I am sorry you said all that, father; she will think I am not satisfied with her as she is, and that's not true. She may say and do what she likes for me, there's not an English girl I've ever seen fit to hold a candle to her. I wish you had let me speak for myself."

"It would have been a waste of words. It's no such

great privilege to be refused, I should say, that you need look black at me for taking the brunt of your first offer on myself. I'll never take so much trouble again in any of your love affairs, I can tell you, for I've argued and talked in the mist till I've made my throat sore. She has just the same kind of obstinacy that her poor father had. You think she is agreeing with every word you say, and then she turns round and twists it all to prove her own side of the argument. She'll marry some scrambling, out-at-elbows Irishman, who will talk sentiment to her by the yard, and bring her to beggary—that will be her end."

"I shall do my best to prevent it, father."

"You'll be a fool for your pains, then. She does not care a rush for you, and never did, and never will. I've made out so much to-day, at all events, and tell you plainly to settle your mind. Why can't you leave well alone? You told me last night that the chief thing you cared for was to behave handsomely now the family are in trouble, and you have behaved very handsomely, and so have I. It went against the grain, but I did my best to persuade her to have you. I offered her a good husband and a thoroughly comfortable English home; and if she prefers poverty and muddle down here, it's not my fault or yours. It might show you, though, I should think, that she's not the girl to make you happy, my boy, eh! or to come after your mother at Pelham Court."

"All the same, I wish you had not meddled, father. She'll be on her guard now, and I suppose I shall never have an opportunity of speaking."

"You shall make your next offer yourself, I promise you. I've talked till my throat's sore, and done my best, and you don't seem the least grateful or satisfied. I thought you'd have been more reasonable, I must say, Marmaduke. Hark, there's the dinner-bell at last. Well, it's something that another of these dreary days is nearly over."

Mrs. Daly sat at the dinner-table that day for the first time in her widow's weeds. She had been almost beside herself with grief at first, and there had been serious apprehension of brain fever; but in a day or two she recovered her self-command, and seemed by a strong effort of will to shut back her overwhelming pain and despair behind the strong gates of reserve and silence within which

she habitually entrenched herself. After that there was little hope of approaching her near enough to comfort her. Her face, always still and grave, hardened into a stony look of endurance that froze words of sympathy on the lips of those who tried to speak them. Her eyes seemed to be always asking the question, "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" and forbidding any attempt at an answer.

Little Lesbia was struck with a great awe of her when she came to offer the bunch of violets she and Connor had gathered in the garden. The large beautiful tears that came so readily into Babette's eyes, welled up at the sight of Mrs. Daly's pale worn face under the circular folds of crimped muslin; and as she held out her hand with the violets, her heart swelled with warm generous feeling; for had not she spent the entire afternoon with John in devising schemes to rescue the widow and her children from poverty and dependence, and secure them a home! She experienced a painful chill of disappointment when Mrs. Daly put out one finger for her to shake, quite ignoring the violets, and met her swimming eyes with a steady, tearless gaze, that seemed somehow to take all the glow and glory from her projects of protection, and made her feel herself as impotent a comforter as if she had sunk back into being Aunt Maynard's snubbed companion again. There was not much conversation during the long evening. After the silent melancholy dinner, Sir Charles Pelham drew John Thornley into a window recess and held whispering consultations with him on business matters from time to time.

Ellen seated herself on a footstool by her mother's chair—secure that no one, not even her cousin Marmaduke on his last evening in Ireland, would have courage to attempt a conversation with her in the neighbourhood of that fortress of grief. Marmaduke Pelham stolidly settled himself in the arm-chair on the opposite side of the hearthrug, determined that, if he might not talk to his cousin Ellen, he would at least spend the last hours of this unhappy visit in looking at her—all the while quite unconscious that he was heaping up bitter wrath against himself in her memory, by being the first person who had ventured to sit down in Mr. Daly's accustomed seat since

his death, and that Connor was making vehement signs of disgust at him for his want of consideration behind his back.

Ellen sent one half-angry, half-appealing look towards him as he took his place, the meaning of which he did not in the least understand ; and then she appeared to forget that he was there. Her eyes fixed themselves vacantly on the now closely-shuttered and curtained window recess. But her thoughts were evidently far away, following the incidents of that evening when she had stood there last talking and laughing ; when the window was open, and when, a mile or two away outside, something was happening that she must not go on thinking about for ever. Now and then she roused herself and turned to look at her mother, and then the expression of another kind of sorrow stole into her face—a look such as a faithful dog casts into his master's face when he sees he is in pain and cannot help him. At such times she would put up her hand stealthily to stroke her mother's knee, or touch softly the drooping head that never changed its position, or showed the least consciousness of her caresses. Lesbia, watching this little pantomime, was startled by the sound of an impatient groan coming from the direction of the window recess, that in the stillness was quite plainly audible through the room. Everybody turned his or her head to discover what it meant, except John Thornley, who stood still, confused and convicted, and who must have been, Lesbia concluded, much disgusted with himself for betraying so publicly the extent to which Sir Charles Pelham's conversation bored him.

Lesbia had opportunity for watching her neighbours, for no one took much notice of her ; and she found so much food for thought, that the long hours of the silent evening did not hang heavily on her hands. It is always a matter of deep interest to watch the way in which new circumstances draw out unexpected points of character in our friends and acquaintances. Little Lesbia was, perhaps unknown to herself, a diligent student of character, and owed the pleasure of her evening to philosophical observations on the change in Mr. Pelham Daly which had been effected by the events of the last ten days.

Everybody in the house had felt the change, but no

one but little Lesbia had had leisure of heart to chronicle its signs and comment on them in thought. It was not that Pelham put himself more forward or was less reserved than formerly during those dark days, but his silence no longer seemed the effect of shyness, and his reserve was not, as formerly, worn as a suit of armour for the purpose of keeping intruders at a distance. He looked a great deal older than he had looked a week ago. He was so busy all that evening sorting and numbering letters, and sat so far out of the circle of the lamp-light, at his father's old pigeon-hole desk in a dim corner, that Lesbia could venture to let her eyes rest for quite a second at a time on his face, while she wondered what the difference in him really was—whether there actually was a line between the black brows and a hollow under the large eyes, or whether it was only the new expression on his face that made him seem so completely a grown-up man now, and the head of the house. She had to turn her eyes quickly away for fear of meeting his when he left his place, as he did every now and then, to go and stand behind his mother's chair, and make her talk to him for a few minutes; but though she was not looking, she could hear the tender tones his voice took in addressing his mother, and observe that Mrs. Daly never ignored his little caresses as she did Ellen's. When he crossed the room and laid his hands on Connor's shoulders to stop him in picking out a dance tune on the piano, as he had carelessly begun to do, there was nothing of the old provoking peremptoriness in his manner, nothing that the touchiest younger brother could possibly resent. Connor, who had begun a petulant twist to shake off the restraining hands, changed his mood when he looked up into Pelham's face and substituted an acquiescing nod and his own bright smile for the intended growl of remonstrance.

Connor and Lesbia had been a great deal together during the last week, and had grown quite intimate. He was very miserable. His handsome face had often been quite disfigured with weeping, and his blue eyes, like Ellen's, were almost extinguished under the painfully swollen lids; but he was not in the least altered or transformed by his grief, he was just the same Connor Daly who could not possibly, whatever tortures of body or mind he might be enduring, get through a silent evening with-

out finding something mischievous to do with his hands, or some occasion for making grimaces at somebody.

Lesbia had liked his seeking her out, to talk of his sorrow, and had felt flattered by his finding her little attempts at soothing helpful. It was a new thing to have people coming to her to be comforted, but as she watched the two brothers that night she acknowledged to herself that, however flattering confidential talk may be, it was the sorrow that could not pour itself out in words that had her strongest sympathy. Yet one or two words, when they seemed to well up from depths of pain after long restraint, might not be amiss. It might not lessen sympathy to hear such spoken, if they seemed to be able to get themselves said to one person only. It was Lesbia's lot to be drawn into a conversation, quite at the end of the evening, that led her to this amendment of her previous opinion. Sir Charles Pelham, coming hastily out of the window recess to wish Mrs. Daly and Ellen good night as they were leaving the room, knocked over the pigeon-hole desk at which Pelham had been sitting and scattered its miscellaneous contents over the drawing-room floor. Lesbia stooped down to help Pelham to gather them up, and it proved to be a longer business than she had counted on. The other occupants of the room one by one slipped away, and they were left unperceived in the shady corner to finish their task alone. Lesbia picked up and smoothed the papers, and Pelham restored them to their proper divisions in the desk. They worked in silence till the last packet was replaced, and then quite abruptly Pelham began: not looking at Lesbia, but fixing his eyes on a certain pigeon-hole where he had just replaced his own old school letters to his father:

"I wonder why he kept these: there's not a single word in them that anyone would have cared to read a second time. I don't suppose I ever did write a word to him that could have given him a moment's pleasure—Miss Maynard, I'll tell you something. The last time I ever talked alone with my father we had a trifling misunderstanding, he and I. It was on the day when Connor and Ellen called on you to ask you to travel to Ireland with us. My father and I walked along the shore, and he wanted me to speak openly with him, and I would

not, though I knew all the time that my reserve pained him. It's folly to think more of that little circumstance than of all the rest, but I do. Perhaps I should be able to grieve openly, like Connor and Ellen, if it were not for that. Can you understand my feeling so?"

Lesbia was so much startled by the abruptness of the address, that not one of the comforting commonplaces she had applied to Connor *would* come into her mind; she could think of nothing to do but to stretch out both her hands towards him.

"Do you know," she whispered, as he grasped them convulsively, "that I could not weep when my father died? I am afraid I did not love him at all as I ought. I have so often wished it had been different. The only thing I can remember about him is, that when he tried to kiss me I used to cry and hide my face. I have often been sorry to think of that since."

"You understand how it is with me, then, and you are sorry for me?"

"Yes, indeed I am."

"I could not have told this to anyone but you; and now, since I have your sympathy, I shall be able to bear it. What you have said has done me more good than I could have believed possible."

"Has it? I am so very, very glad."

The sound of John's footsteps approaching the door made them aware that they were holding each other's hands still. Lesbia snatched hers away and ran breathless up stairs to bed.

Perhaps it was just that last ten minutes that made the whole evening so memorable to Lesbia.

"What you have said has done me more good than I could have believed possible."

She could not go to sleep for a long time from repeating those words over and over again to herself, and for feeling the tingling in her fingers that Pelham's close clasp had left. Bride, who had her own troubles to think over, could not understand what made the child so restless.

CHAPTER XX.

"The land that I fly from is fertile and fair,
And more than I ask for or wish for is there ;
But I must not taste the good things that I see,
There's nothing but rags and green rushes for me."

IRISH REAPER'S HARVEST HYMN.

"It is a dismal place," John explained to Lesbia. "I don't know how we can let them go into it while we live here. Bride finds fault with Castle Daly ; but, I tell you, it's a palace compared with the other house. A long, low, shambling, barrack-like building, with paintless doors and windows, and endless low passages reeking with damp. The O'Roones have been living in half a dozen rooms, and of course they allowed every kind of dilapidation to prevail, and rubbish to accumulate, in the other parts of the house. One does not know whether to wonder most at the folly of building such a mansion in that out-of-the-world nook, or the stupidity of letting it rot to pieces once it was there."

"Connor was talking to me about Eagle's Edge the other day," remarked Lesbia. "He had a great deal to say about the grand entertainments—feasting all the squires of County Galway—that his grandfather and great-grandfather used to hold there. And there are stories about the place too—dreadful stories of fatal duels fought across tables in the dining-rooms; and of smugglers from the coast coming and hiding in the old cellars and passages that lead to nothing, and startling the ladies, who knew nothing of what was going on, with wild banshee cries, and mysterious flittings to and fro of nights. I should be frightened out of my wits to spend a winter in such a place ; but I don't believe Ellen will mind ; and Connor likes it—he would far rather live there than in a commonplace comfortable house."

"I can quite believe it of him ; but his indifference to decency does not, I trust, extend to the rest of the family. I should not have suspected Pelham of sympathizing with the insane vanity that values itself on having spendthrift ancestors, and living in houses stained with their crimes.

Yet he looked, I thought, rather blank yesterday evening, when, after letting him know the state of the roof at Eagle's Edge, I advised him to give up all thought of inhabiting that lonely spot, and content himself with a house in Ballyowen."

"John, you had the cruelty?"

"Cruelty!"

"Yes, to expect the Dalys to come down to living in a house in a town."

"Why not, if the town house is the best place to live in?"

"If I were they, I would rather bear anything than lower the dignity of the family in the district where for so many centuries they have been looked up to as kings and queens."

"Pinchbeck dignity, if it wants a pile of mouldy bricks to perch upon. I am sorry you are adopting such notions, Leshia."

"I'm not adopting them, I have had them always. There have been times, and times long before I ever saw the Dalys, when I sat on those conservatory steps at Uncle Maynard's, and wished I could wish myself into a descendant of a noble family."

"Natural aspirations for a school-girl, but too senseless to be tolerated in anyone who has passed beyond that gushing period of existence."

"I feel the same still, however. I am often unhappy to think that no Thornley ever did anything interesting, and that Uncle Maynard made all the money he left me in business."

"Honestly—which certainly gives you much less right to be proud of it, than if one of your ancestors had stolen it from somebody else five or six hundred years ago."

"You are dreadfully prosaic and tiresome, John. Sometimes I hate to talk to you. One is obliged to hide one's real feelings when you are in your hard moods. It is like bruising oneself against a rock to speak to you on a subject one has at heart. One feels like a little bird, or a butterfly, that flings itself against a window-pane, thinking it free air, and falls back wounded."

"Lesbia, that saying is not original—you are quoting from somebody else; I am certain of it. Come, tell me

at once who said that first, and on what occasion was I guilty of the bruising some one has accused me of."

"It is my own opinion of you, indeed, John; but I believe it was Ellen Daly who said it. It was two evenings ago, after she had been talking to you about trying to get the old woman released from prison, who won't answer the questions the lawyers want her to answer, about things that happened on the night of Mr. Daly's murder. She did not tell me how you had vexed her; but, when we went up stairs together, she walked up and down my room for an hour in such a state of mind, sometimes talking against you, with her eyes flashing. You would have been surprised to see it."

"No, I have seen her eyes flash."

"And sometimes breaking down, and crying for her father as if her heart would burst. Bride heard our voices, and came in and took Ellen away. She said it was very Irish, all of it, and that I had better not have argued."

"What did you argue about?"

"Why you, of course; I could not help standing up for you, and, when she accused you of being hard-hearted, reminding her of all the trouble you take, and how hard you are working to arrange their affairs, and make things better for them all. I repeated what Sir Charles Pelham said in his last letter, about the immense obligation all the family are under to you. She did not attempt to contradict that; she only cried."

"Hum! A rock, I think you said—and then a window-pane. I suspect you have involved the metaphors."

"John, I do believe, at the bottom of your heart you are vexed at my repeating this conversation, though you asked for it."

"I am not in the least degree vexed; only I shall be obliged to you for the future, when you hear me abused, not to throw into people's teeth imaginary obligations, for which, as I should like them to know, I do not claim the slightest gratitude."

"Oh, John! when you are working yourself almost to death, and doing so much more for them than any of their own relations."

"It interests me simply as business. If I undertake a thing I like to go through with it. You might take an

opportunity of mentioning that to Miss Daly; for as to misusing any influence I may happen to have in this odd country to impede the ends of justice, I simply shall not do it, however often she asks me. Her own father's murderers! Certainly, I don't understand how a sentiment of gratitude towards the old witch who brought her to that horrible night watch should obscure her desire for justice on them. It seems out of all proportion."

"If she believed that they had meant to kill her father, she would be bitter enough against them; but you know she thinks ——"

"Yes, I understand, that an attempt on my life is no such great matter—only a perhaps not quite laudable attempt to put an obnoxious person out of the way. Yet, let my life be ever so worthless in her eyes, one would think she might allow the crime to be hateful. It's the way, however, with everybody here. Sentiment is everything, and there is literally no respect for law or justice anywhere."

"Ellen Daly does not think your life of no consequence; no one could think so *now*."

"I should very much like to have an explanation of that *now*."

"Well, I mean now, when all the chief people of the neighbourhood are beginning to find out how superior you are, and when Sir Charles Pelham keeps sending you such flattering letters, and so many of our relations in England, who had forgotten us, are claiming our acquaintance and making a fuss."

"In fact, *now*, when I have the honour of being guardian to Miss Maynard and her eight thousand a year. Well, I suppose *we* are not a sentimental family. Your candid moments certainly don't reveal any high-flown delicacy that one need be afraid of bruising. You had better run away now, for I am busy; and here comes Bride, in time to help me to look over the builder's estimate of repairs once more. Where are those papers, Bride?"

"Pelham Daly carried them off rather in a pet, I thought. You told him, last night, there was no use in going further into them, and that he and his mother must give up all thought of inhabiting Eagle's Edgo. Have you heard anything to alter your opinion?"

"No—but——"

"Ah, John, you don't find your second family of bankrupt orphans so easy to manage as your first; and, I must say, you don't show yourself so competent to the task as you did of old. There was no hesitation for us when a disagreeable thing had to be done. Steady, right-about-face—dragons if dragons are in the way—march into their mouths; such were the orders you gave us in the old times. There was no compromise about you then; and that was what I, for one, liked, and what carried us through."

"If a big boy will wear a little coat, and a little boy a big coat; and neither of the fools is my brother, I have less authority than Cyrus to make them change their habits. I growl, but I am obliged to let each take his way."

"You will let the Dalys take their way about the big house, then?"

"I don't see where the money for the necessary repairs is to come from; but I presume it will have to be found, if they won't live anywhere else. There is no doubt, I suppose, that all the family wish to live at Eagle's Edge."

"Mrs. Daly seems to have only two wishes left—to please her eldest son, and to live in a house that belonged to her husband. Poor woman! she never would let him have any peace in his own houses while he lived, and, now he has gone, she seems disposed to make a religion of being miserable herself in the precise spot where she would not allow him to be happy."

"In Mrs. Daly's case, you cannot label the sentiment 'Irish,' and dismiss it forthwith as unworthy of consideration."

"I sympathize with it none the less. I wish people would be content to make their friends happy while they have them, and when they are dead ——"

"Forget them comfortably."

"No, mourn them in a reasonable way."

"I don't think, if I were dead, I should object to be mourned as Mr. Daly is mourned by some. However, that is nothing to us. Eagle's Edge is five miles distant from Castle Daly, and the road is dreadful. We shall see very little of them this winter, if they settle there. So much the better for us."

"Ah, you are beginning to see, then, that I was not so very far wrong in warning you about Lesbia. You will reconcile yourself the more easily to what has happened since you left home yesterday. The Dalys have taken their departure."

"Left the house without waiting for my return—you can't mean it!"

"I do. Pelham spoke to me early this morning of his mother's wish to leave Castle Daly at once. He said he had been telling her of the difficulties you saw in the way of their removal to Eagle's Edge, and that, since they could not have a house of their own immediately, she had decided on accepting an invitation from Anne O'Flaherty to stay at the Hollow."

"That child Lesbia has been giving herself airs, then."

"No, I don't think so. She may long sometimes to enter on the full sweets of ownership here; but she has too much good feeling and affection for the Dalys to show them a glimpse of such a wish. It was just a spurt of unprovoked pride on the part of young Daly; and, by the way, John, if you think you are going to rule him with a rod of iron, and turn him out after any pattern you please, I fancy you will find yourself mistaken. He is very proud, and since he cannot prevent our living in his house, he has made up his mind to be very distant and haughty towards us. You should have seen him standing there, on the hearth-rug, making known his intentions to me, and pointedly ignoring Lesbia, who sat all the time crouched on a footstool, with a screen before her face, very much disposed to pout at not being referred to, but too frightened to put in a word. Poor fellow! I was sorry for the signs of sore hurt feeling that peeped out in all he said. It's not an agreeable experience for anyone to come down in the world, and the kind of people who won't be content with taking their fall in one good shock, but must be for ever casting themselves down from imaginary heights and breaking their bones over again, certainly make the most of it."

"I wish you had dissuaded them from leaving so hastily. How was I to guess that my innocent proposition of the semi-detached villa would be looked on as an insult, and put them all to flight?"

"I said what I could; but Miss Daly excused their haste by putting it on her mother's dread of excitement, and fear that a crowd from the villages round would collect to see them drive away, if the time of their departure was known long beforehand. I suppose two or three hundred people can howl louder than fifty, or I should say we did not gain much by our haste. I thought I had been cautious, and allowed no suspicion of what was afoot to get abroad. Yet, no sooner was the carriage ordered, than three or four of the servants darted off full speed to carry the tidings to all the cabins near, and by the time the preparations were made, and Mrs. Daly ready to start, the front garden, from the steps to the gate, was crowded with people on the watch. The instant the front door opened, and Mrs. Daly and Ellen appeared, they fell down on their knees. John, I never saw such a sight—the men swaying themselves backwards and forwards, and howling and wringing their hands as wildly as the women, all in a moment; and in the midst of the weeping, one fellow sprang to his feet, and rushing up to Mrs. Daly, lifted his hand, and swore a horrible oath of vengeance against the murderer for his blunder. That was the word—I heard it. He looked so wild and savage, and such a strange expression of remorse crossed his face, when a corner of Mrs. Daly's wide crape mantle touched him, that, if I had been a magistrate, I should have taken him into custody as an accomplice on the spot."

"But, what a shock for Mrs. Daly! how did they all bear it?"

"Pelham put his arms round his mother, and lifted her into the carriage in a fainting state, and Ellen, who was behind, lifted her veil, and to my amazement laid her hand on the swearing man's arm and addressed him by name. I could not hear what she said, for at the sight of her face a perfect howl of grief broke out, and there was a rush from all parts of the garden to get near enough to the steps to exchange a word with her—shrill women's voices invoking blessings on her from every saint in the calendar, and begging her to speak just a word—to let them hear her voice again telling them she would never desert them."

"How long did all this go on?"

"Hardly a minute: Pelham called impatiently from the carriage, and Ellen, after trying hard to get out a word, turned round, and while all the people looked on, threw her arms round Lesbia's neck and kissed her twice: then she pushed her gently forwards to the front of the steps, where she herself had been standing, and got into the carriage. The people made way quietly for the horses to move on, and I was astonished to see how ready they were to take up and understand Miss Daly's little pantomime. I confess I did not comprehend what she meant to say to them by it, till I saw the impression her action made on the crowd. There had been some angry looks directed towards Lesbia and me, and mutterings about proud Englishers and upstarts, but Ellen's kiss changed the people's temper towards us at once. Poor little Lesbia was crying, partly from sympathy, and partly from nervousness, and when Ellen pushed her forward, she took out her handkerchief and buried her face in it and sobbed. The most eloquent speech ever spoken would not have enlisted these strange, excitable people's sympathies so strongly in her favour as that sight did. 'Look at her,' I heard the women standing near say: 'it's breaking her heart she is to see them turned out. The darlint young lady, wid riches and beauty, and luck that bates iver everything in the world ye iver heard of. She can't enjoy it at all, for thinking of the wrong done to them that have to go. A tinder heart she has, be sure. The blessed saints grant her grace to do the right thing, and bring the true owners back to reign over us.' I am afraid an obvious method of bringing the true owners back occurred to every man, woman, and child in the assembly, when Connor leaned quite out of the carriage window, just as it reached the gate, to take a last look at the house, and wave another good-bye to us on the steps. He is looked up to as the representative of the family instead of Pelham."

"What impression do you suppose this scene made on Lesbia? She was talking to me for a quarter of an hour just now, and said nothing about it."

"There are odd little reserves about Lesbia every now and then, and I observe it most where the Dalys are concerned. She pretends to be annoyed; but I believe that

Ellen Daly's conduct in putting her forward secretly gave her extreme pleasure, and that she looks upon it as a sort of resignation of sovereignty in her favour, almost as good as a patent of nobility elevating her into an *ould* family on the spot. You won't find her the easier to manage for it. I only hope she won't consider that '*noblesse oblige*,' and marry Connor Daly, in order not to disappoint the public opinion of the 'tinderness' of her heart."

"I begin to think I was a great fool for consenting to stay here."

"I don't think it—I know it."

"So the house is empty, and Lesbia's reign begun."

"I don't know what you mean by empty. There is one person more in it than there was all last year, when you professed to find it full enough."

"It is a comfort to know that the old furniture will have to stay just where it is till the house at Eagle's Edge is ready to receive it. Lesbia's hands will be stayed. We are respite from French looking-glasses and ormolu for the present."

"There is a greater similarity between Lesbia's taste and yours than you give her credit for; she was congratulating herself on the same subject half an hour ago. I cannot profess to sympathize with either of you. Battered chairs and faded carpets and hangings have no charms for me, and would not have, if it could be proved that they had come straight from Tara's halls, and countless generations of O'Connors and O'Neills had had the spoiling of them. I confess to a feminine longing for things of our own; they need not be looking-glasses and ormolu. Why should we not succeed in creating an appropriate, characteristic Thornley home out of this house?"

"It will come to that, I suppose, in time; but I wonder why we were in such haste to alter the appearance of this room when we first began to inhabit it. We should have shown better taste, I think, if we had left things as we found them. The oil-painting, for example, that used to hang opposite Mr. Daly's arm-chair: I happened to see it the other day when I went up into the attics, and I really think we were hasty in banishing it from the room. We

will have it back in its old place for the few weeks longer we can keep it."

"My dear John!—that pink and white monstrosity with the impossible yellow hair!"

"Not so impossible when one knows what it was meant for."

"You happened to see it! It had its face to the wall, and all my trunks and Lesbia's were piled in front of it."

"Very well, then, if you must have the exact truth, I went up to the attic on purpose to look at it. I moved the trunks and lifted it out, and thought the sight repaid me for my trouble. There, now, sneer at my taste as much as you please, but admire my candour."

"I have not spirit to sneer. I am wondering whether there is not something intoxicating in the air of this country which mounts up into people's heads and makes them sentimental against their nature. Shall I be able to withstand it myself in the long run? I dread to find myself lost in admiration before a picture of Darby O'Roone. Will you let me have one to match your 'Colleen Bawn' when you hang her up again?"

"Certainly, if you set your heart upon it; though I say I can't see the point of your suggestion."

CHAPTER XXI.

"The fishes flete with new repaired scale;
The adder all her slough away she flings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she mings;
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale;
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays; and yet my sorrow springs!"

SURREY.

"THE winter is over and gone; the time of the singing of birds is come." The triumphant notes of a skylark raining music from the heights of a cloudless April sky brought these words into Ellen Daly's mind as she stood one morning, six months after her father's death, in the garden before Eagle's Edge, shading her eyes with her hands from the morning sunshine, and watching the receding figure of her brother Pelham as it dwindled to a speck

in the distance of the winding road towards which her face was turned. When she had seen him grow into a black speck no longer distinguishable from the peat piles that bordered the road, she intended to return to the house and tell her mother that she had kept him in view through just so many minutes of his daily absence, and thus lessen by a second or two the agony of restless anxiety in which Mrs. Daly now consumed every hour that her eldest son spent away from her.

It was a daily small boon to Ellen to have this good reason for breathing the air outside the house and looking around her.

"The winter is over and gone: the time of the singing of birds is come." The time for fresh beginnings—for some new hope to stir under the ice-crust of the old sorrow. Was it most pain or joy to find oneself alive, still feeling, still capable of seeing beauty and joy in the world, after a blow that seemed at first as if it ought to kill you?

Ellen lingered a moment or two to debate this question with herself, as, having lost sight of Pelham, she raised her eyes to follow the lark's flight upwards into the wide blue.

"The time of the singing of birds is come"—the time when nature calls aloud to us and bids us awaken out of the deadness of personal grief, and rejoice in the new manifestation of His beauty that God is making to the world. "Behold, *I* am alive for evermore, and the dead live to *Me*." Was not this the secret saying which the new verdure was writing all over the hills, and which the young pattering leaves and singing-birds were repeating in music? It must be well to have ears to hear and a heart that could respond with a little flutter of returning joy and thankfulness.

What Ellen saw when she called back her eyes from the heights to which her messenger of hope had carried them, and looked round her, was a wide solitary stretch of grassy valley reaching up to slopes of bare green hills that on every side shut out the distance. A narrow stony road, twisting in and out among the bog with the devious curves of a river, wound through the valley to the two passes between the hills which afforded exit to the world beyond.

Other landmarks were few and far between. Here and there the monotonous green surface was broken by black ridges, and dark, shining pools of peaty water, flanked by conical brown hillocks where the newly-cut turf was piled to dry in the spring sun; here and there on the lower slopes of the hills, or down in a hollow of the turf cuttings, the grey stone walls and peat-thatched roof of a cabin with a thin blue cloud of smoke hanging round its eaves, might be discerned. Far in the distance, at the head of the valley, a whitewashed farmhouse showed conspicuous, being distinguished far and wide by the little plantation of wind-grieved aspens and elms that sheltered it and made it the boast of the district.

Faint signs of life and stir came thence to greet Ellen's eyes and ears with tokens of human neighbourhood. The bark of a sheep-dog from the hill; the flutter of a woman's red petticoat, contrasted against the green of the sloping field whence she was driving her cow home; the figure of an old man with a great creel of turf on his back, toiling up the steep path to the open door. Further away still, in an opposite direction, could be seen a barefooted girl, with a ragged black cloak on her head, making her way over the swamp through a tall patch of reeds towards the house. She was the first-comer that morning of the numerous pensioners from the neighbouring cabins who had been dependent through the bitter winter on Ellen's charity to keep them from actual starvation. Was the winter over and gone? It had been a time of terrible suffering; but surely the worst must be past now. Here was spring, with seed-time come again, and, by and by, a harvest of plenty perhaps to wipe out the memory of the privations it had been such misery to witness during the past months. There could be no wiping out of the grief that shadowed her own household; but there might come, what Ellen told herself would be infinite relief—leisure to dwell with her sorrow in peace, and weave it into her life so that the sense of loss should not overshadow the bright memory of the love that had gone before.

As Ellen turned to re-enter the house, she looked at it with more desire to find it home-like than she had allowed herself to feel hitherto.

It was a long, low, grey stone building, in the main part

only one story high, but breaking out at each end into ramifications too shapeless to be called wings, which asserted their independence of the original design of the builder by rising to various heights one behind the other. The front and back doors were exactly opposite each other, and standing wide open, Ellen, as she walked up the garden path, could see through the house to the farmyard beyond, where a barefooted girl, late as was the hour, was milking a cow in a shed; and a boy, open-mouthed and round-eyed, stared back at Ellen while he mechanically worked the pump-handle up and down, heedless that the water had long since overflowed the pail, and was making streams and puddles all over the yard, to the manifest disgust of an old sow and her piglings, which testified their disapproval by a chorus of gruntings. The farmyard was inclosed by a rudely-built stone fence; and beyond it lay a deeply-shaded grassy ravine, sloping upward between the sides of two hills, and widening at its highest point into a deep hollow, once the basin of a mountain tarn, now a miniature valley, green with the vivid tints of moss and uncut bog vegetation. Behind it again, a foil to its gem-like green lustre, rose the bare, stony peak of one of the Maam Turk mountains, that thrust its dark shoulder forward towards the lower range of brightly-coloured hills, like an angry giant frowning down on the sport of pigmies. Ellen's eyes sought this mountain head, and dwelt upon it in preference to any other feature of the landscape; for, softened by distance, it had formed one of the range of purple peaks she had been used to watch from the school-room window at Castle Daly.

The daily little crowd of pensioners had begun to gather round the backdoor of the house when Ellen entered the Hall; and this year it was real misery, too grim for cajolery and adroit flattery, that had to be dealt with. The girl Ellen had seen running through the bog had just gained the house, and was leaning against the side of the door, pale and panting after her run, and fixing craving eyes that looked out of large black hollows on a plate of crusts of bread and cheese rinds, the remnants of yesterday's supper, that stood on the kitchen dresser. Ellen emptied the food into her trembling, outstretched hands, before she turned aside to go to her mother's room,

and she tried not to see that two emaciated women, with babies in their arms, and a lame beggarman, who had settled themselves patiently on the door-sill to await her leisure, looked with jealous disapproval at the lavishness which gave such coveted treasures into one hand.

Mrs. Daly was waiting for the little scrap of news of Pelham almost as eagerly as the beggars were waiting for their dole of food.

Had Ellen seen him safe to the turn in the road? Which horse was he riding? Not the one that had stumbled yesterday! Had he looked himself to the fastening of the saddle-girths?—remembering Patsy's stupidity,—and that there was no one else in the stable now. And, above all, what had Ellen given him for breakfast, and had he eaten heartily?

A look of reproach came into Mrs. Daly's eyes with the last question, for she suspected Ellen of encouraging Pelham in a habit he had fallen into lately of eating sparingly, that there might be more food for Ellen to divide among her pensioners when he had ridden away. She was willing to suffer herself with the starving people; but it was quite beyond her strength to endure the thought of Pelham suffering, and her grudge against the authors of his self-denial showed itself each day in reluctance to spare Ellen when the hour for the distribution of food came.

"What, again to-day?" she said, as Ellen prepared to leave the room. "Are they all collecting again here to-day? You promised at first that it should be only three times a week."

"Yes, but the distress increases so terribly fast, and we can give so little. It would not be safe to trust them with more than one day's allowance of food now. Even Mr. Thornley allowed that. He said it was necessary to let them come every day—he did, indeed, mamma."

"But he told you, at the same time, about the soup-kitchens opened at Maam and Ballyowen, and said it was on the whole best to trust to the public relief."

"In most cases, but not for the sick and old about here, who have no one to send so far. Even Mr. Thornley gave them leave to come to me."

"I don't know why you say *even* Mr. Thornley, Ellen, as if you were adopting the poor people's prejudices against

him. Why does he stay here, but for pity and charity. The Thornleys have no ties to the place. They are free to go and spend their money in England, and escape the sight of all the misery here, if they please."

"I wonder if they could go away and forget it. I know what I should think of them if they did."

"You are unreasonable, Ellen. I don't want to be hard, but there are thoughts that wipe out pity. I, at least, can't feel that all the suffering is unmerited. Crimes call down vengeance, and I can't be surprised, that where such wrong has been done there should be misery."

Ellen turned away, seeing how her mother's lips closed in a hard, stern line as she finished speaking, and what a grim look of pain settled on her face. There was nothing more to be said. Yet, when she had reached the door, a sudden impulse made her come back and kneel down by her mother's side.

"Mamma," she said, in a quick, frightened whisper, "that is what they think themselves—many of our neighbours here; and it leaves them no hope. The autumn before last, when other places suffered from the blight, this neighbourhood and Anne's Valley were spared. It was not till after that night that the blight fell here. They think he cursed them when he was dying; that it was his blood crying up to Heaven that brought destruction down on their fields; but we know better. I think sometimes that he would come back to help them if he might, he was so pitiful."

A quiver passed over Mrs. Daly's face; but she tried to keep her voice steady.

"Why do you tell me this?" she said. "I believe they are right, but I cannot be pitiful."

"It makes you more sorry for them, does it not?"

"I don't know why it should. I have my share of suffering, which you seem to forget. I see Pelham's face and yours growing thinner and paler every day. Those other mothers outside, who have known all their lives what it is to see their children want, and are used to it, are not worse off than I. One's heart can only be full of pain."

"Come to the kitchen with me this morning, and see the other mothers. You can sympathize with them better than I, and they will take it as a sign of forgiveness."

Mrs. Daly stooped down and kissed Ellen's pleading face, while her own softened.

"Some day," she said; "but I am not strong enough to make such an exertion to-day. Go to your people, and I will try not to grudge what you and Pelham give up for them again."

When Ellen entered the kitchen, and saw the stores for distribution that had arrived that morning by a special messenger from Castle Daly, she was disposed to repent of her disparaging mention of the Thornleys.

There were large basins of Indian meal porridge, ready cooked, to secure its being properly used, and rice, weighed out in separate doles, and small cans of soup for the sick. Some one at Castle Daly was anxious to spare her perplexity and trouble—yes, and to secure that the distribution should be made with the strict impartiality and the precautions against waste on which the Thornleys laid such stress amid their charity. Ellen added this remark as she read the careful directions, in Bride Thornley's neat handwriting, that accompanied the gifts. Such care might be absolutely necessary; but Ellen was not reasonable, and bitter thoughts kept rising in her heart, as she carried on her morning's task of distributing according to Bride's views. She had never acted the part of doler of other people's charity before: she had always hitherto been free to follow the instincts of her own lavish nature, and she could not put herself and her own feelings out of sight as completely as in like circumstances Bride Thornley would have put hers. She could not get it out of her head that it was want of generosity and delicacy in the Thornleys not to leave her free while acting for them. Would not she in Bride Thornley's place have been lavish to any one in hers?

Her secret discontent was spoken out loudly and exaggerated by the recipients of her bounty. They loathed the novel food prepared for them in a way they did not understand, and craved for a morsel of the diet they were accustomed to, with a sick longing painful to witness. It might be a want of generosity on her part—Ellen's conscience told her it was; but she could not help saying, in answer to an old woman's lamentation over her portion of porridge, which she declared her sick daughter could not eat—

"Well, I can't help it, Biddy. You must go away with what you have got. It is Mr. Thornley's bounty, not my own, I am dividing among you to-day. I have not bit or sup left of my own to give anyone."

"Worse luck for us all, then. Sure we know it's heart's blood of your own you'd give us if you could; and no wonder this that comes from him has the bitter taste wid it, and no power to keep the heart up, since it's grudging us every mouthful he is. Bad luck to him for a usurper that has shoved himself into a better man's place."

"No, no, Biddy, you must not speak so of Mr. Thornley; he does not grudge what he gives, and he is not a usurper. His living at Castle Daly does not injure us. I wish you could all get that out of your heads."

The old woman drew close to Ellen, and, looking up with a cunning and savage leer into her face, whispered, "I'm not in the boys' secrets—why would an ould crater like me be? but it's no secret that if some one had not stood by ill-luck in his place, on a night that you know of, it's not in Castle Daly he'd be this minute. It's a warmer country than that, I'm thinking, that would hould him; and since he's been due there so long, it's little good that will follow his doings anywhere else."

"Biddy, I wonder how you dare say such a word to me," cried Ellen shuddering; "take up your basket and go away, you wicked old woman. No wonder the food does not nourish you when your heart is so full of evil thoughts against the giver. Where would you and your poor little grandchildren be by to-morrow without the help you despise?"

"May be wid the Holy Virgin and St. Patrick, and the blessed saints. It's a grand entertainment they'll have to make ready up above for all the crowds and crowds that'll come up to them before the summer is over, and the next potatoes ripe, for they're doing nothing at all for us down below this year. They're forgetting us intirely. It's no use praying to them any more; they're deaf, or asleep may be."

A murmur of disapproval rose from most of the women, and Ellen said—

"Come, Biddy, you know you are saying what is wrong. It is not the time to lose heart and leave off hoping and

praying, when fine weather has come at last, and the seed is being sown that with the blessing of God will bring a good harvest, and make you all prosperous and happy again."

"The best harvest that ever ripened will never do that, avourneen, for most of us. It's not I that will ever trouble the Blessed Virgin or the saints wid prayers again for the pratees, for good or bad it will be all one to me. They may do what they like for me from this time. Shure, have not ye heard that we're turned out of our holding, and that I and my dead daughter's children are sheltering wid a neighbour? My two sons have gone off to Cong to be put on the public relief. They had their wives and children of their own, and they must live, they said. I went down on my knees to Mr. Thornley to let us keep the bit of a roof over our heads, and the ground for the pratees, and be put on the works all the same, but the saints could not be deafer than he was. He said it was dead against a new law they've been making against us up in London. The Lord reward thim that made it for what they've done, wid him that carries it out. It's not likely we'll eat with many thanks the starving morsel that keeps us alive to make beggars of us for ever."

"It sounds very hard, but if it's the law, I suppose Mr. Thornley could not help acting on it. When better times come we shall be able to put your sons back into their little bit of ground, perhaps."

Biddy shook her head despondingly, and took up her basket, and Ellen turned to speak to a group of women who were still lingering round the doorway, and who had testified their disapproval of Biddy's disparaging remarks on the saints by much crossing of themselves and many ejaculations.

"Well, Mrs. Kelly," she began, "did you manage the walk to Cong last market-day, and buy the potatoes for your garden with the money I gave you? I hope you have not delayed. The price of seed-potatoes increases every day, I hear, and yet it won't do to lose hope and leave the ground unsown."

"Indeed, and you're right, lady; if it had not been for the blessed hope we have in what the saints will do for us yet, I'd never have been able to drag myself to Cong, the

weary way that seems to have stretched out double since our troubles began. Yes, I bought the pratees, and dragged 'em back with me, thinking each one of 'em worth gould; for indeed I'd seen a thing done by the boy that sold 'em such as I'll warrant was never done in Ireland before; there was a crowd of poor people round the scales in the market-place, clamouring to get the first turn; and when my turn came, the sack was nearly empty. The boy that was selling shot out what was left of the pratees into the scale: and, will ye believe it, lady, there was one over-weight, and he took it back again and put it into his pocket. One potato! It's that we've come to in Ireland now, to be grudging each other the matter of one potato. How will it end at all?"

"And I hope, Mary Joyce, you were one of the early-comers and secured your share. You must not spend the half-crown I gave you on anything but seed-potatoes for your garden; remember that. I have no more half-crowns to give away, I can assure you."

The two women looked sheepishly at each other, and the younger took up the corner of her head shawl and began to twist it round her fingers.

"I wish I had waited till your husband came back, Mary," said Ellen, reproachfully. "I am afraid you are not to be trusted; how angry he will be if you have thrown away your last chance of next year's harvest."

"Well, then, I'll spake for her," put in Mrs. Kelly, "for it's nothing she need be ashamed of she's done; and we won't tell a lie about a holy thing. We're neighbours, and we agreed together afther your goodness hearing our prayers and giving us the money that day. Shure, we said, it's not the pratees in themselves that'll be any help to us, it's a blessing to keep them from rotting in the ground we want beyant anything: so I wid my share of the money went to Cong to buy all the pratees I could for the two of us, and she wid hers set out on a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's. Well to buy a bottle of holy water from a holy man that's come there to bless the water against the disease. It's only a slip of our gardens we've been able to plant this year, that's true, but shure we know that what is in it is safe; and seeing we have not begrudged the holy water and the prayers, may be the pratees will grow quite beyant

our hopes, and have twice as many roots to them as if they had not been blessed. Why would not they, since there's a God above all?"

"I'm afraid you have been deceived, Mrs. Kelly. He could not be a holy man who sold you the water on such a pretence; and surely you know better than to think you can buy a blessing for money."

"Would you have us grudge paying for it, then? Would we get any good that way at all, do you think, Miss Eileen, alanna? Shure, after all the destruction we've seen wid the pratees, we would not have had the heart to turn up the ground or put the seed in if we had not had something beyant the common to trust to."

A lecture on right grounds for trust would have been ill-timed just then, even if Ellen had known how to word it; and somehow she had not the heart to quench a hope, however false its foundation, that was bringing a little glow of life again into Mary's wasted face. She had it on her lips to say, "Don't let Mr. Thornley hear what you have done, or at least take care he does not hear that I gave you the money;" for more than the loss of her last half-crown Ellen grudged to think of the triumph such an illustration of the folly of giving money to the starving people would enable him to hold over her the next time they argued the point together. She recollected herself in time, however, to change the words into a request that at least the women would keep their own counsel, and not send their neighbours to waste their last farthing on the holy man's doubtful wares.

They were ready enough to promise anything to pacify her now, and by degrees, though slowly, the crowd dispersed, the people moving languidly away towards the scattered cabins in the valleys and on the hill-sides, stopping often to rest by the wayside from sheer weakness. It was long past noon before the flutter of the last red petticoat disappeared at the turn of the winding road, and the scene became as solitary as when Ellen looked out over it in the early morning.

CHAPTER XXII.

"The precise speculative tenets of this Brotherhood—how the Universe, and Man, and Man's life, picture themselves to the mind of an Irish Poor Slave; with what feelings and opinions he looks forward to the Future, round on the Present, back on the Past—it were extremely difficult to specify."—SARTOR RESARTUS.

THE work of the day was over for Ellen when her pensioners took their departure. The rest of her time till evening had to be passed in waiting. Very dreary waiting it sometimes was, for Mrs. Daly's nervous apprehensions on Pelham's account always increased as the afternoon drew in; and as she invariably began to expect his return long before he could possibly appear, Ellen had to exhaust her ingenuity in inventing satisfactory reasons to account for the supposed delay, or to weary herself in efforts to divert her mother's attention, and persuade her that the hours would pass more quickly if she did not so often ask what o'clock it was.

One other event besides Pelham's return might be expected to occur on alternate days, and that was the passing of the barefooted runner who carried the post-bag between Ballyowen and Maam, and who sometimes paused to drop a package at the gate of Eagle's Edge.

It might be at one hour of the long afternoon, or it might be at another—the cross-road postman was above being tied by hours—but when there was a reasonable hope of a letter from Connor, Ellen never failed to bring her work or her book to the window-seat, and begin her watch directly after luncheon. Even when the post-carrier passed the house without stopping, he was an object of interest to Ellen, and she would close her book, or let her work fall on her knee, and follow his movements with her eyes, from the moment when she first descried him, a moving black speck on the furthest visible curve of the road, till the dusty bare feet had eaten up all its lengths and turns, and the figure disappeared again on the opposite horizon. He was the connecting link between the solitary little valley and the world beyond; an evidence that there actually was a world beyond from which news could come; places

where the sun was shining while it rained here, where people had plenty to eat and lived free from fear, and gathered round cheerful fires in the evenings to talk and laugh and make much of each other with unanxious hearts. If not to her, to some people somewhere, words from that happy distance, soundless but full of life and hope, were travelling in the movements of the dusty feet she watched ; and there was a great deal of comfort for Ellen in the thought.

The April day when Ellen had had so much talk with her pensioners brought her a share of the pleasure her liberal fancy bestowed every day on other people.

When the runner came to a certain point in the road, which Ellen always saw him approach with anxiety, his pace slackened, he came to the wished-for halt, fumbled for a minute or two among his rags as if he were in search of something, and then set off at a swinging trot down the path that connected Eagle's Edge with the main road through the valley. Ellen was at the garden gate long before he reached it, in spite of the great show of speed he put into his movements, and held out a cup of milk with a spoonful of whisky in it, in return for the packet he thrust breathlessly towards her—an effectual bribe to memory which in these famine times, when every extra step was painful labour, she thought it wise to administer.

The man leaned, panting, against the stone wall, while he drained the cup.

"The Lord reward ye for that for iver and iver," he said, in a hoarse whisper, as he handed it back. "It's good stuff intirely you've given me, and the first sup of dacent food that has passed my lips since I stood here last. May St. Peter hear me that says it, and be ready at the gate of heaven wid the keys to let you in quicker than another, on account of your coming wid that to meet me at this gate to-day, for indeed I don't know that I'd have lived to the end of my journey widout it, I'm that wake wid the fast-ing. See, I've brought you two to-day, a thick letter and a bit of a newspaper folded up."

Ellen eagerly examined the writing on the covers ; and the man stood still, watching the changes on her face with a sympathy that robbed his scrutiny of all impertinence.

"And, indeed," he said at last, "I'm thinking he's a lucky boy that penned the strokes there. I wish, wid all my heart, he was to the fore instead of meself, to see the power they have. Shure I'd give you ivery letter and paper that all the bags on my back hould if only each one of thim would give you a minute's pleasure like that I see on your face."

"The letter is from my brother, Tim, and I hope it brings us good news of him; it's the first you have brought me this week," said Ellen. "You had better run on. I dare not ask you to come in and rest, for you are very late to-day. The people at Maam will complain of you if you are too unpunctual, and it would never do for you to lose your post this year."

"And indeed it would not, whin the farthing of money I get by running my heart out is all that stands betwixt us and starvation. It's Death I'm running away from, every step of the road; and faith, it's such a near shave that I'd be glad to let him git hould of me and end it, if there was none but meself depending on meself. He need not be in such a hurry, for he'll have it all his own way in these parts soon, I'm thinking."

The man ended his sentence in a sort of murmur, as he unfolded his arms from the top of the wall, and prepared to set forth again, with the look of quiet, acquiescing despondency on his face which Ellen was beginning to notice as the prevailing expression on most faces that came across her now.

Mrs. Daly, who was rather more unwell than usual that day, had been dozing in her chair when Ellen left the sitting-room, and was still asleep when she returned. It was quite as well, Ellen thought, to have the opportunity of examining Connor's packages without her mother's anxious eyes scanning her face as she read. Connor was not a particularly prudent or thoughtful correspondent, and could never be made to recollect that the amusing stories of scrapes and adventures that glided glibly off his pen were apt to produce a more serious impression at home and be longer remembered there than he intended. Yet, though he had not become more prudent or less outspoken, Ellen gathered from his letters that the months of private sorrow and public calamity that had passed over his head since

they parted had not been without their effect on his character. He was certainly changed, in so far, at least, that a great deal in him which she had formerly attributed to mere boyish love of excitement and a spirit of contradiction, was settling down into a fixed enthusiasm, and a real, if wild and unpractical, purpose. Ellen did not believe that his present associates, and the political schemes of which his mind seemed full, were safe friends and desirable interests for him to have taken up ; but he had taken them up in full earnest now, and she could not help liking the reality better than the pretence. She was often startled at sentences in his letters that alluded to future possible dangers, and to schemes that sounded like midsummer madness to her ; but she hoped she might put a good deal down to Connor's imagination, which was sure, she thought, to overleap by a long way other people's purposes. More than once she made up her mind to write an earnest remonstrance, and then, looking over the letter that had frightened her, she would come upon some sentence—a line quoted from one of his friends' poems, a paragraph in a speech—to which her whole heart rose up in response, and the sheet that had been meant to condemn was written over with warm sympathy and admiration. The reading of Connor's letters, and of the newspapers that accompanied them, had been going on for some months now, and as Ellen only read one side, they were having a sensible effect upon her. She hardly knew, indeed, the hold which this literature was gaining over her mind, or how the glamour of eloquent words playing round half-defined projects dazzled her sober judgment. It might be a will-o'-the-wisp hope, but in the darkened horizon it was the only light visible, and she could not keep her eyes from turning towards it.

When everybody was desponding it was something to hear of young, warm hearts beating with high purpose still ; of brains that had energy to plan ; of spirits, burning with indignation, that refused to acquiesce in the inevitableness of calamity. Their indignation might be ill-directed and ill-timed ; it might be unjust to attribute any part of the sufferings of the nation to wrong-doing on the side of its rulers, but the very fact of so attributing it seemed an opening to hope. The blame and the anger were a little

ease to the dull, dumb ache of despair. Ellen had come to look forward to the reading of Connor's letters as to a stimulant which gave her energy to bear the pain of the misery thickening around her without sinking under the burden.

The sheets Tim had brought to-day were more closely written even than usual, and there was a folded newspaper to be examined afterwards. Ellen softly built up the sods of turf on the hearth, and then, as clouds were gathering over the sky, and the light was waning, she drew her seat close to the window and began to read. The first page was a soberly-written account of every-day proceedings, such as might be read to Mrs. Daly without exciting her nervous fears. Was Connor growing considerate? Then came a sheet with a particular mark upon it, which Ellen seized: the dashes and blots and flying curves of the letters showed her the mood in which it had been scribbled off.

"Yes, Ellen," it began, "I have spoken to him at last, as I said I would. You must keep all that follows to yourself. My mother and Pelham will not understand it, but I want you to know the whole. This great event (it will be the turning-point of my life, the last push that has definitely launched me into a course I have been long tending towards) fell out just ten days ago, and already we are close friends and brothers. He is a more glorious fellow even than I thought him when I knew him at a distance—a fellow I could follow through life to death, and be thankful to have such a one to die for. Don't laugh at me, Ellen; don't think it's one of my old delusions. I can tell you that there are people who have so much of the real stuff in them that the mere contagion of their enthusiasm turns pretence into earnest and pinchbeck into gold. He is one of them. Believe in me for the future, for my spirit has fastened itself on to his. D'Arcy is his Christian name—the other you know; but I won't write it, for though we none of us are ashamed of our names, and Ireland will ring with this one before another year is out, I don't want John Thoruley to get hold of it before the time; and as you know, there is a family prejudice against it amongst ourselves. I told you, did I not, of my first meeting with him six months ago? How one miserable

day last autumn, soon after I came back to Dublin, when I was feeling utterly downhearted, as if I did not care for anything or anybody, I turned into Conciliation Hall, just for want of something to do, for the chance of hearing Dan O'Connell speak on the Relief Measures; and how towards the end of the evening this fellow got up. I had not been caring for the thing at all till that moment. I had been feeling an angry dull indifference, as if Ireland herself might be ground to powder for all I should care, after what had been done in Hill Dennis's hut two months before; and his words stung me to life and better thoughts again. It was not the words only, it was something in the look and gesture, reminding me every minute of my father, that took such hold on me; and then when in leaving the crowded hall he and I chanced to jostle each other in the doorway, and he turned and spoke and smiled, the conviction flashed on me at once that the likeness could not be an accident, but that I must have come across that son of our poor aunt Ellen's of whom we used to hear rumours now and then when we were children, but whose name had never been mentioned among us of late years. I know all the rights and wrongs of that now, and will tell you some day, and you will exonerate him from all blame as I do, and glory in the thought that some of our blood goes to the making of the man who is by and by to resuscitate Ireland. He is a great deal more like our father than either of his sons. He is a little like you, if you can imagine yourself six feet high, with broad shoulders and big hands, and a face that has a charm in it—like the Pied Piper's, in the volume of poems I brought home last spring—

‘To draw
All creatures living beneath the sun
After him, so as you never saw.’

I learned his name that night before I went back to my lodgings, and I always kept my eye on him afterwards; but though we came into contact every now and then in public places, and several of my friends became intimate with him, I avoided being introduced to him or letting him hear my name. You see I knew it would be all up with me if I once came near him—that I should be booked for

over for all he has gone in for ; and I thought of my mother and Pelham, and of the old prejudice that has kept this one of our relations who is worth generations of Pelhams out of our house, and I hesitated to surrender myself to his influence irrevocably. It's done now, however. Ten days ago I chanced to have to wait an hour at the *Nation* office to correct the proof of a poem of mine that was to appear in the next morning's paper. He came in while I was at work, and sat down on the table where I was writing and began to talk. Before long I told him my name, and in an hour, by the time the printer's devil came up for my proof, we knew each other as well as if we had lived in the house together for years. I spend more of my time in his rooms now than in my own. The fact of my being his cousin, and of his trusting me, has altered my position with the heads of our party. I have passed the Rubicon now, you may depend upon that ; and Eileen, aroon, I don't think you are the girl to think the worse of me for it, or to shrink in your heart from any consequences you may have to face on my account. I wish you could have heard a speech of D'Arcy's last night, when he told us out that he was not one of those tame moralists who hold that liberty is not worth a drop of blood, and that if it could be proved to him that an insurrection was practicable he would vote for it that hour. Stay, I will mark the report of his speech in the *Nation* I am sending. It has just come in, and I have glanced through it ; and even tamed into black and white, the words have such a ring with them that I know what they will do to you. You will spring from your seat and begin to pace up and down the room, and your face will glow, and you will look what you are, every inch his cousin. You have a better right to feel the words than have all the other Irishwomen whom they will thrill to-day ; for, Ellen, though you will hardly understand how it can be so, they partly come from you. He was sitting in my room waiting to walk down with me to the hall where last night's meeting was held, when the post brought your weekly letter. Up to the moment of my opening and reading it, we had been talking over the quarter-acre clause in the new Relief Act, which was to be the subject of D'Arcy's speech, and as a sort of comment on its wording

I read your description of the sufferings of the small holders in the valleys round Eagle's Edge. It did not strike me that there was so much in what you said—it was nothing but what we all knew (only too well), and had heard from a hundred quarters; but perhaps in the excitement of political indignation we have not been realizing the misery of those who are doing nothing, but suffer. At all events, your instances of what you had seen yourself seemed to move him beyond anything. Before I had read many sentences he covered his face with both his hands, and when I looked up at the end of the letter I was sorry I had looked, for the tears were streaming down between his fingers like rain. He did not speak a word to me while we were walking down to the place of meeting: his face was white, and his lips set, but I could tell by the light in his eye and the quick nervous step and the gestures of his hands, how it was working in him; and when his turn came to speak, the words that leapt out were on fire. People who have heard O'Connell in the same place in his best days say that hardly ever was there such excitement, such groans of pain, and such rage as that speech called out. He was in very low spirits himself, though, as we walked home, for he has a great dread that all the feeling and spirit of the new movement will work itself out in mere words and excited assemblies that lead to nothing. He says we have too many speakers and poets among us, and too few men of action and sound judgment; and he quoted Davis's lines—

'The tribune's tongue or poet's pen
May sow the seed in prostrate men,
But 'tis the soldier's sword alone
Can reap the harvest when 'tis grown.'

Later in the evening he and I concocted a scheme together that pleases him, because it has at least a show of preparing for action in it. It was agreed among the chiefs some time ago that it would be well to send deputations about into the country to sound the people, and set some system of organization on foot. D'Arcy thinks that my knowledge of the people round Ballyowen may make it useful for him and me to go down there together and canvass that neighbourhood, making it a centre for working

the west. I am trusting you more than is right in telling you all this ; but I know what you are, and I want your help. None of the people at home must know if I come to Ballyowen with him. I must keep it quiet, but, if possible, I should like to see you ; and, Ellen, I am sorry for it, but I want you to bring me some money. I'll swear to you that I have not been extravagant this time ; that I am not spending a penny on myself that I can absolutely help ; but the cause wants money, and I must take my share of expenses with the others. We shan't leave Dublin for about a week, but after that time keep your wits about you, and be on the alert to interpret any hint of my neighbourhood that I manage to convey to you. You may trust me for its coming in some guise that will not betray me to anyone but you. Only be on your guard, and don't let anything escape you." The signature came here ; but there was still another half-sheet in a yet more hasty scrawl, that had evidently been slipped as a second thought into the envelope when it was already bursting :—

"By the way, why won't I kill two birds with one stone when I am at Ballyowen? Mo Craoibhin Cno,¹ think of her curls, and say if this is not a good name for her, to use between us two? Why should Pelham have it his own way all these months, and I, when a great chance like this comes to me, not put in a taste of a stratagem to spoil his game? I vow to you, Ellen, that only this minute has the notion come to me, and though I don't expect you to help, I take you into confidence, to put you on your honour not to hinder. I must see her, unbeknownst, when I am in her neighbourhood. She shall not have the least suspicion of my real business, I promise you, but see her I will. Where will be the sin of putting an innocent bit of blarney over her and making her believe it was the glamour of her brown eyes drew me from sober work to make a pilgrimage in disguise for the chance of looking into them, and getting a word and a smile to keep up my heart till I could come openly? I half believe myself, as I write, that it is that, and nothing else, is bringing me to Ballyowen,

¹ Mo Craoibhin Cno, literally, "My cluster of nuts," or, "My nut-brown maid."

though the thought is only a minute old. It will be strange if I can't put it in a way that will convince her, when it has had a whole week to grow and shape itself into a fact. Unless I am very much mistaken in her, the spice of mystery and scheming that will flavour the chance-meetings we'll have, and the sly tokens I'll send her, won't be altogether displeasing, and will go a good way to put her out of conceit with old Pelham's prosy love-making. I don't think I shall tell D'Arcy of this little pendant to our plan—he is too grim in earnest to have a thought to throw away on any matter that does not advance the cause; but, between you and me, I take great credit to myself for having thought out such a neat contrivance for making love and patriotism serve each other."

Ellen smiled as she read these last words; here was a little bit of old Connor creeping up again through the seriousness he had been magnetised with. She could not help being amused; but the smile soon changed into a sigh at the prospect of the embarrassment which she foresaw would arise from this characteristic scheme of his; and she cast an anxious glance towards her mother's chair.

Mrs. Daly had taken up her knitting on awaking, and now sat with her eyes fixed on her work: her lips were moving mechanically, forming silent words as her needles clicked. Perhaps for once she was not observing how late it was getting; perhaps she was trying to still her heart with words of prayer as the hour of the day that always tried her most approached. Anyhow, Ellen thought it was as well not to arouse her from her meditation, which seemed an unusually peaceful one, by speaking to her. The turf fire had smouldered down to a heap of white ashes on the hearth; but the day was warm, and it would be easy to add fuel and blow up a cheerful blaze when the sound of Pelham's horse's hoofs was heard in the distance. Ellen opened the window softly to let in the sound. She knew her mother always liked this to be done. All through the winter, when the blast from the mountain pass cut like a knife, they had kept up the practice, and now it was a soft westerly breeze laden with the earthy growing smell of coming summer, that crept in. There was a great stillness inside the house and out—a stillness that brought more of content and rest to Ellen's spirit than she had

“Without a grave, like weeds to lie,
 Lord, have mercy !
 Despairing thousands wait to die.
 Christ, have mercy !
 The famished infant vainly cries,
 Its mother dead beside it lies :
 Let our anguish pierce the skies !
 Parce nobis, Domine !

“Outcast of the nations long,
 Lord, have mercy !
 We bear a foreign tyrant's wrong.
 Christ, have mercy !
 Black our fearful crime must be :
 With triple scourges lashed by Thee,
 Famine, plague, and slavery.
 Parce nobis, Domine !

“Disarmed and bleeding here apart,
 Lord, have mercy !
 A vulture preys upon our heart.
 Christ, have mercy !
 Oh, bitter is our helot gloom—
 In life no joy, in death no tomb.
 Despair and vengeance rife the gloom.
 Parce nobis, Domine !

“Without a prayer or passing bell,
 Lord, have mercy !
 The shroudless armies hourly swell.
 Christ, have mercy !
 The dying, ghastlier than the dead,
 With blanched lips have vainly said,
 ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’
 Parce nobis, Domine !

“Woe ! woe ! to feel the life-blood freeze,
 Lord, have mercy !
 Fruitlessly, by slow degrees.
 Christ, have mercy !
 Oh, had we fallen on the plain,
 In rapid battle swiftly slain,
 We had not perished thus in vain.
 Parce nobis, Domine !

“‘Their God is wroth,’ our foemen say.
 Lord, have mercy !
 Our Father, turn Thine ire away.
 Christ, have mercy !
 Bid Thine angel cease to slay ;
 Have mercy, Heaven, on feeble clay.
 Here Thy stricken people say.
 Parce nobis, Domine !

"Before the isle is all a grave,
Lord, have mercy !
Arise, mysterious God, and save.
Christ, have mercy !
But if the pestilential sun
Must see us perish one by one,
Thy hand hath made—Thy will be done.
Parce nobis, Domine !"

"Ellen, I have called you three times and you have not answered me. Don't you see that it is raining, and that the drops are beating in and drenching your face and your clothes ? No, don't shut the window—we surely must hear something of Pelham soon ; but come out of the reach of the rain to the fire, and speak to me."

Ellen started. She had not felt the splash of the rain on her face, it was already so wet with tears, or noticed the change that had rapidly come over the sky in the last hour ; and now her conscience smote her for having been so engrossed by this poetry of sorrow as to have forgotten the pain near her which it was her immediate business to soothe.

The room might be made to look a little more cheerful, at least. She sat down by the fire at her mother's feet, and began to blow up the peat-ashes and skilfully pile fresh sods, till the long, low room was filled to its furthest corner with fitful, dancing light.

"It is not really so late as it looks," she said. "The darkness has come on quite suddenly ; I was reading ten minutes ago. You have been very good, dear mamma ; you have not once asked what o'clock it was ; and now has not the time passed more quickly than usual ? Are not you surprised to find the evening here ?"

A curious smile passed over Mrs. Daly's face. She had been making a great effort over herself to control her nervousness in order to spare her daughter, and now she would have been glad if she could have completed the self-sacrifice by making the admission Ellen's eyes so coaxingly asked ; but amiable subterfuges did not come readily to her grave lips. "I am glad it has seemed short to you," was all she could bring herself to say. "I determined not to disturb you when I saw you were reading something that interested you, but of course I knew all the time how late it was growing."

"And I have been selfish; I ought to have thought of you. But hark! there is the delightful sound of his horse's hoofs on the road. You are rewarded, for he is close at hand, and it is not really late."

"Then run, Ellen, and see that Patsey is in the way to take Pelham's horse. He will be wet through. And speak to old Bridget about getting his supper ready immediately. I hear voices in the yard; but surely Pelham cannot have brought visitors home with him when he knows we have nothing to give them to eat."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Ireland of the Holy Islands
Circled round by misty highlands,
Highlands of the valleys verdant,
Valleys of the torrent argent.

"Since the trance of childhood bound me,
I have felt thine arms around me,
More to me than any other
Hast thou been a nurse and mother."

J. DARCY MAGHER.

THE Daly establishment had been reduced since the beginning of the winter by the defection of two English servants whom Mrs. Daly had brought to the new house with her, and who had been frightened away early in the year by the loneliness of Eagle's Edge and the miseries of the famine year. An anxious consultation with Ellen over ways and means had induced Pelham to persuade his mother not to replace them till the times improved, so that the kitchen regions were now only tenanted by one old woman and a girl and boy, over whose doings Ellen was obliged to exercise active supervision to prevent her mother's notions of comfort and propriety from being outraged a dozen times a day. She made a hasty incursion into the back premises before she opened the door to Pelham and the guests he was bringing with him; called old Bridget from telling her beads in the chimney corner, and summoned Patsey and Kathleen from a flirtation in the wash-house, to attend to the business of the evening. Then she went to the front of the house and stood in the

porch, holding up the stable lantern, by whose light Patsey had been doing his courtship, as a beacon to assist the visitors in their progress from the yard where they had dismounted, through the straggling wind-grieved shrubs and up the broken path to the front door. The scene had greatly changed since she had looked from the same spot in the morning. The clouds, which had lain then like silver ridges in the western sky, making a shining background for the Maam Turks to rear their dark heads against, had now spread over the whole horizon, and, swooping down the sides of the hills, filled the valley with wreaths of mist and slanting sheets of rain. It was like looking down into a chaos of seething elements; smoke and water curdled confusedly together, while the solid features of the landscape loomed through, ghostlike and dim, as if they were taking uncertain shape for the first time from the boiling caldron of creation. Ellen was well used to the rapid changes of weather peculiar to the country, and could see almost as much to admire in the mountains when they were wrapt in rain as when they slept in peace with the sunshine on their heads. But the effect on a stranger's eyes of the mountain farm-house seen in such a storm was not cheerful.

One pair of eyes on which the lighted porch loomed as a goal, to be reached through the blinding rain barrier, grew very dark and pitiful as they looked, taking mental note of all the accessories of the picture, and putting them aside for future consideration, while their owner cautiously picked his way through the rain-pools and stones of the path.

"Yes, it is a horribly melancholy place for them to live in; you are quite right, Lesbia, we ought to try and tempt them away whenever we can."

By this time the murmur of voices close at hand had reached Ellen's ears, and she descried through the gloom two figures, one wearing a habit and lady's hat, and neither as tall as Pelham, pushing their way between the wet over-hanging shrubs. Heedless of rain and soaked gravel she ran forward to meet them.

"Is Pelham with you? Has anything happened? Speak low, the window is open, and mamma is listening," she cried, holding out a hand vaguely towards the two, without

any spoken greeting. John Thornley took the hand in his, and felt how cold and trembling it was.

"Pelham is in the yard holding his horse while Patsey puts ours into the stables, and nothing whatever is the matter," he said. "Do you never mean to see me all the rest of your life, Miss Daly, without suspecting me of being the bearer of bad news? I am afraid you must hate the sight of me."

Ellen did not suppose that it mattered much to him or anybody else whether she did hate the sight of him or not; and she was too busy greeting Lesbia to have an answer ready for this remark.

"Dear Babette, how kind of you to find your way out here in such weather. Your habit must be soaked through. Come in quickly, to the kitchen fire first if you don't mind, while I prepare mamma to see you, and tell her that Pelham is safe. It is very silly to be so nervous, I know, but I believe fear is catching, and you can't be surprised that mamma should have a dread of sudden news."

"I did not say I was surprised," put in John blankly, wondering what unlucky spirit of *mal d' propos* always made him say something to Ellen Daly that sounded like censure.

He chose to feel too much snubbed to come forward uninvited into the circle of firelight in the kitchen towards which Ellen dragged Lesbia, but stood leaning against the door-post, dripping little pools of water from his macintosh on to the floor, and watching what went on within, while Ellen thrust Lesbia down into the three-cornered chair by the hearth, and proceeded to lift off the heavy cape of her habit, and deal with the wet knots and tangles of her hat-strings and veil. He was so absorbed in looking, that when she darted into a dark corner and reappeared with a heavy wooden pail of peat-sods in her hands, he let her drag it across the kitchen and land it safely in front of the fire before he had presence of mind to come forward with offers of help. When he did make his way to the hearth, he stood looking at the peat-pail with such an expression of horror that Ellen could not help laughing in his face, as she rubbed away the red ridges the iron handle had left on her fingers.

"You carried that great heavy thing all that distance yourself?" he said.

"Yes, I did ; I don't remember that you helped me, Mr. Thornley," she answered gaily.

"You might have asked me ; I was there."

"Yes, you were there, but to tell you the truth I did not want your help. If you mean to go on wearing your wet coat I had rather you stood in the passage and let it drip there, instead of just in front of the fire, where I shall have to kneel soon to make the toast."

"John, I do believe you are half asleep," said Lesbia ; "you have no idea how stupid you look standing up in your dripping overcoat."

John took off his overcoat, and planted himself in front of the peat-pail, but was not quick enough to secure the peat-tongs with which Ellen proceeded to pile up the fire.

"Show me the place where this has to be carried back," he demanded when she had finished her task.

"It is not going to be put back in its place just yet ; there must be a fire lighted in the room where Lesbia will have to sleep to-night ; and as Kathleen has evidently quite lost her wits at the sight of visitors, and Patsey is in the stables, and Bridget laying the cloth in the dining-room, I think the shortest way will be to do it myself."

"No, I shall do it."

"You !—the notion of an Englishman knowing how to lay a *peat* fire !"

"You must really let me."

"I'll be much obliged to you, Mr. Thornley, if you'll carry the pail across the passage ; but after that you had better come back here and sit by the fire with Lesbia till your rooms are ready."

She took up a lamp and the peat-tongs, and led the way across the passage into a bedroom, and he followed ; but when he had deposited his burden and received her smile of thanks and little nod of dismissal, he could not make up his mind to leave her. She thought him somewhat stupid and tiresome for standing upright by the chimney-piece while the fire-lighting business progressed, his helpless hands hanging down, or making vague dashes to reach her things she did not want, or to drag the peat-pail into corners where it was not required to be.

If he really cared particularly to study the art of piling peat-sods scientifically, she thought he need not have chosen

to do it in wet clothes, in a cold room ; and that there was no occasion to look so profoundly melancholy over the lesson.

"There," she said, arising from her knees when she had applied the match, and the little tongues of flame were shooting gaily from fibre to fibre of the carefully-arranged cone of sods, "do you think you shall know how to do that another time ?"

"I can't imagine how you come to know how to do it," he answered, as his eye fell on the white taper fingers that had been so busy, and then travelled upwards to the fair, soft, delicately-tinted face.

"I will explain the mystery if you like, though it involves a revelation which Pelham and my English cousins consider very humiliating to Connor and me. We, both of us, passed the first years of our lives in a mountain cabin. Mamma had always very delicate health, the country did not agree with her, and papa insisted on our being sent out to nurse, as used to be the fashion for everybody in our rank of life in this part of the world when papa was young. I was left long enough with my foster-mother to remember the cabin life perfectly ; and I know two or three things, besides how to build up peat-fires, that you will never know if you live to be a hundred, and study all the books in the world. One is, exactly how it feels to run about barefoot on a turfy mountain side on a spring morning early, and how delicious potatoes dipped in egg-noggin taste when you come in afterwards and sit on the cabin step, with the sweet peat-smoke curling round you—a sensible Connaught pig munching the parings at your side, and a brood of downy little goslings stumbling over your feet. You would not think the peasants such savages for living in the way they do, if you happened to know how pleasant all that is."

"I can't promise to be an immediate convert to the convenience of pig-haunted cabins, but I give in about the peat-smoke from this night. I promise to find it the most delicious scent in the world, and to like no fire so well as a peat-fire."

"You must have been very cold when you came in then," exclaimed Ellen, surprised. "You shall have time for the good impression to be confirmed, for now, as you have borne

my first humiliating confession so well without any of the triumph over me I expected, I will tell you something else. This is *your* fire I have been lighting. I sent old Bridget to make up one for Lesbia when I looked into the dining-room just now to speak to mamma. This room and fire are for you."

She looked up playfully into his grave face, and was puzzled to meet no responsive smile of thanks, no glance up, even of the eyes that had sought the ground when she began to speak.

She could not guess that he was afraid to look up or speak, because the thought that she should have acted servant to him was more than his reverential chivalrous heart, that knew itself hid under such a cold crust of reserve, could bear.

When the door closed behind her he crossed his arms on the chimney-piece, and leaning his head on them and staring down at the fire, saw it all over again. One by one the rapid changes in the face, which he now acknowledged to be the dearest face in all the world to him, rose up before his eyes and photographed themselves in his memory so as never to be forgotten again. The patient weariness that was now the prevailing expression when the face was at rest (he had not failed, when she was kneeling by the fire and looking down, to observe the red lines round the eyes that told of recent tears), the flicker of amusement that brought light and life back to the countenance at once, the playful curl of defiance on the smiling lips, the glow of interest when speaking; lights and shades that followed each other as quickly as the shadow and sunshine on the mountain-sides on a windy day, and had the self-same magical glamour of beauty about them. He tried hard to find something to criticize, to satisfy his conscience as to his loyalty to his old ideals. Bride would not have stood there and talked, and shown her thoughts to a comparative stranger, without any special reason for doing so; the little excitement of an unexpected influx of visitors would not have changed her mood from a tearful to a talkative one all at once. Could there be worth or persistence in feelings that followed each other so lightly? Was there not a want of dignity in such easy communicativeness shown indifferently to everyone; for it was no special

mark of friendliness to himself, he perfectly understood. He tried to think he did not like it—that a person of such a nature could have no confidence to give that would be of any value; nothing in her to make real intimacy worth striving for—but it would not do, he could not wish any change in her. She was just herself—she had got into his heart and he must worship her. Why should not the lily open out its leaves and show all its golden heart? The sun and the wind that visited it might be dazzled by its white sheen and the lustre of gold in its depths, but its proud, pure head held itself unsullied and apart, however many gazers came.

What nonsense comparisons are. John caught himself up, ashamed and annoyed at the extravagances into which his thoughts were rising. He had schooled himself all his life against exaggeration, or excessive feeling of any kind. Heavy responsibilities laid on him had sobered him early; he had been used to say that in his life he had never had, and hoped never to have, time for sentiment. Sober duties, that had to be met with well-regulated energies and sober judgment, had succeeded each other too rapidly to leave him any interval for dreaming; and of all kinds of dreams he was most resolute against love dreams. If he ever fell in love, he had meant it to be with such sober certainty of fitness and possibility as would provide against the waste of energy, thought, and life, that he held to be the worst result of disappointment in such a matter.

And now that it had come, in a very different guise to any he had intended, was there still time to turn it away? Did he wish to turn it away? His thoughts flew back through the events of the last eight months, since the autumn evening when Ellen and Connor had appeared suddenly at Castle Daly, concentrating all their joys and sorrows into a bitter-sweet draught which his spirit seemed to taste. His first amused distant admiration, and Bride's disdain of it. The pitifulness of that night in Dennis's cabin, when the playful girl he had half-admired, half-feared, had seemed to him transformed into an angel of consolation and strength. The long dumb pain of seeing her grief through the dreary weeks that followed, and having to stand quite apart from it, feeling every tear of hers he saw fall like a weight on his heart, and possessing

no power to comfort. The meetings since they had left Castle Daly; the senseless keen pangs of mortification at heedless little words and phrases, that perhaps were not meant to carry any pain with them; the equally senseless keen pleasure called up by smiles or thanks, or sentences of acquiescence in something he had said, which reasonably could not be made to bear the weight of signification attributed to them at the time. The underlying satisfaction that through all the winter had been the secret spring of his content, arising from the fact that, unknown to herself, he was protecting her and hers, standing every day between them and a great flood of calamity, that would overwhelm them but for his unmeasured exertions and watchfulness. Ah, yes! and that was the consideration which must determine his course. The question no longer was—whether or not this love would end in his own good and well-being. He had made himself necessary to them—to her; and as long as she had no one else to look after her interests and protect her, he would not desert his post, let the pain be what it would to himself. When his thoughts reached this point, John raised his head from his arms, drew a long breath, and began to move about the room and get ready for dinner. If Ellen had passed a Rubicon, and taken a resolution that rainy afternoon, so had he; he looked the future in the face, and with his eyes open accepted a love which he had very little hope would ever bring joy into his life. He did not say to himself that there are some sorts of pain better than joy, or some sorts of giving that transcend taking a millionfold, and that life is indeed more than meat; for he had not come yet to give such clear account to himself of what was working within him; but he felt the calm and strength that a deliberate putting away of self-seeking always brings with it.

Ellen, meanwhile, had really thrust aside all sad thoughts, in the bustle and actual hard work that under present circumstances an unexpected inroad of visitors to such a house entailed. When Lesbia had been taken to her room, and furnished with a change of dress—the selection of which from Ellen's wardrobe had given rise to a good deal of chatter and reference to old times between the two girls—Ellen returned to the kitchen, and found Pelham standing by the fire, with an expression of much anxiety, mingled

with a certain triumph, on his handsome face. She lifted up her hands with pretended amazement and horror at his doings.

"I would not have believed it of you, Pelham! You to have been guilty of the indiscreet Irish hospitality of bringing hungry visitors to a house where there is not a scrap of food for them to eat. Yes, it is true, there is no use in your turning pale now, or grumbling at me, for I can't help it. Our tiresome hens are not laying as well as they did, and I gave away two eggs this morning for a girl that is dying, and I must keep all I have left for mamma, so there is absolutely nothing in the house but some bread and the leg and wing of a chicken that old Bridget has fricasseed for your dinner, and that you must eat on pain of breaking mamma's heart. What could you be thinking of, to expose our famine Castle to such keen eyes as those I have shut up in the panelled bedroom over there? I should not have expected it of you."

"Well, there is a boy now at the door. I made them ride on as we passed through Lenane, and went into the market to see if I could get hold of anything. There was not a bit of meat to be had; but I secured a white loaf and some cakes—the last bit of bread there was in the town; and I bought some decent fish that I spied in a tub by a cabin door, and that a woman told me she had caught out of the creek this morning in her petticoat. It's a poor kind of fish, I'm afraid; but it will be something to eat. I had it put into a basket, and hired a boy to run after us with it, and he has just arrived."

"How clever of you, Pelham; you are worth a hundred of Connor and me for foresight. I suppose these purchases will have made a great hole in next week's allowance, and some one will have to pinch for them; but, never mind, we won't grudge. We'll have two dishes on the table, and piles of buttered toast, and for four or five hours we'll fancy ourselves in the land of plenty again. I'll do my best with the fish to make it pass for a dainty, and I don't suppose either of the Thornleys has much discernment. I should be quite easy if I were sure it was last year's little Babette who was going to sup with us; I could make her think we were having a pic-nic, and enjoying ourselves immensely; but you know there is a degree of uncertainty

in that quarter now. I left little Babette in my room, dressing in my old pink silk that she used to covet rather last year; but it may be the great heiress, Miss Maynard, who walks into the dining-room."

"I don't at all know what you mean; I have never seen anything of the difference you speak of."

"No, I dare say not; you are too snubby yourself ever to be snubbed; but what induced you to invite them here, and why did they come?"

"I met them on the road between Good People's Hollow and Lenane. They had been spending the morning with Anne O'Flaherty, and said that they had intended to call on our mother, but had been detained at the Hollow, discussing relief measures with Anne. It was raining fast, and Eagle's Edge was nearer than the Castle, so I proposed that they should come on with me and stay the night. I hardly expected they would have consented; but Thornley said that he had business to discuss with me—and I certainly thought that she—that he, I mean—in point of fact, that both of them rather caught at the idea of coming here."

"Ah, I wonder if she can have heard." The words escaped from Ellen's lips involuntarily, and then a look of perplexity crossed her face, and she stopped short.

"What is the matter? What do you suppose she can have heard?"

"Nothing—nothing!—don't look at me like that, Pelham; you know I say silly things often."

He came close to her, and detained her when she would have escaped by holding her wrists tightly, looking down into her changing face, with eyes full of dark fire.

"Yes, yes!—but silly or not, I choose to hear this!—What have you got in your mind? You have no business to have suspicions of *her* that you are ashamed to speak out."

"No, I know I ought not. Dear Pelham, I so hate myself for being such a sieve, that I should like to bite my tongue out. It was only that I had a letter from Connor this afternoon, and I wondered whether by chance she could have heard anything that made her want to talk to me about him."

"By chance! I wish by chance you would give a straightforward answer. How could Miss Maynard possibly

know anything about a letter of yours that only arrived this afternoon? You don't mean to insinuate, do you, that she and Connor correspond?"

"No—of course not. Please, let me go, Pelham; I know I am very silly—I wish I could hold my tongue."

"That is not the chief thing to be wished; what I wish is that you would not concoct mysteries. I don't know what it is between Connor and you that makes you always seem to be living in a web of plots. I suppose you like it; but it is perfectly hateful to me to live among people whose doings I can't understand; and I beg, that at all events, you won't draw into your mysteries those who naturally prefer straightforward ways. At least, don't insinuate stratagems that don't exist, as if you could not believe in such a thing as a truthful person."

The indignant tones and looks were very hard to bear; the colour flew to Ellen's face, and an eager vindication of her own straightforwardness rose to her lips. Then she remembered Connor's letter, and the secret sympathy she had that afternoon resolved to give to him and his friends. "I have crossed the Rubicon now, and I don't think you are the girl to shrink from any consequences you may have to face on my account." The inevitable concealments,—the having to seem a traitor to household confidence, would be to her the worst of these consequences; but since she had resolved to run such risk, the best homage she could pay to truth would be not to attempt any self-justification just then. The indignant flush faded out of her face, as Pelham continued to look at her, and tears slowly welled up and drowned the anger in her eyes. She felt very unhappy and helpless, but there was nothing to be said: Pelham relaxed his hold on her wrist.

"You think me very savage," he said, "and I suppose I am. Ellen, I am sorry I have made you cry. I did not think you cared enough for anything I said to be made unhappy by it; but I have so much distrust and dislike shown to me out of doors, that I can't help feeling it hard when you and Connor put such a mist of secrecy between us, that I don't know whether you are sympathising with my enemies or my friends."

"Oh, Pelham, how could we sympathise with enemies of yours?"

"The Thornleys are my only friends, and my friendship with them is counted as a crime by the stupid people here, who, because they choose to believe that our father met his death in Thornley's stead, transfer to him all the horror due to the actual murderer."

"No, not all the horror; you would not say so if you knew more about it."

"There now, another mystery."

"Pelham, I can't help it; if people tell me secrets that have life and death in them; I can't betray unhappy wretches that trust me."

"Perhaps not; but you can help giving all your sympathy to the wrong side. You ought to acknowledge that the Thornleys are behaving nobly, and to be indignant at the monstrous ingratitude shown to them. I say nothing about their generosity to us, though I wonder where you can think we should be without it; but just consider what a sacrifice they have made in staying through this miserable winter at Castle Daly, toiling night and day, and spending their money to feed a set of people who have no claim on them whatever, and who give them nothing but hatred and misconception in return for their charity. Why does not your sense of justice stir itself on their side?"

"Lesbia is liked—the people are grateful to her."

"She can't separate herself from her brother; she is not content to be adored by his haters."

"Oh, Pelham, no more can I separate myself from my brothers. You don't know how hard it is when there is so much sorrow on every side, that one feels as if one's heart were being torn to pieces every minute. I can see your hardships at all events, if I can't care as much as I ought for Mr. Thornley's, and I promise you now to be just to your friends, and to stand up for them to the extent of my little power. Indeed, I did not mean to make you suspect Lesbia of anything underhand. You misunderstood me there. Dear Pelham, let us be happy this one evening—forget that I vexed you, dear, and let us all be happy together this once. I want so to have one happy evening, we have been sad so very long." She threw her arms round his neck as she spoke, and tried to draw his face down to hers. The muscles of his countenance relaxed, but he held his head rigidly upright.

"You can be unhappy and happy as you please then?"

"No, you uncompromising creature; but to-night I could be a little happy if you would let me. I don't know how, but I think some fresh light has come into the house since morning. It won't last long, there is so much to quench it; but let us bask in it for an hour or two. Some one is thinking kind thoughts of us somewhere to-night, and the warmth of them trembles round us."

"I don't understand such nonsense as that. Shall you?"—(hesitating)—"Shall you?"—(with a great effort)—"Are you going to read that letter of Connor's to Miss Maynard?"

"No, that I am not; I shall not think of doing such a thing. Pelham, you may say what you like about my secrecies, I can't defend myself; but one thing you must believe about me—that my secrets are not of *the* kind you suspect, and that I am not and never will be a clandestine go-between. No, not even for Connor."

Then the stiff neck bent, and the kiss of forgiveness was given, with a warmth and tenderness of brotherly affection that Ellen had never before experienced from him.

Decidedly it should be a very happy evening.

The first thing that Lesbia did when Ellen left her alone to put the finishing touches to her toilet, was to thrust her hand into the pocket of the wet riding-habit that hung against the wall, and draw out a somewhat soiled and crumpled envelope, directed to herself, and still unopened. A lame man-servant, who had come forward to help her to mount her horse at the gate of Happy-go-Lucky Lodge, had thrust it into her hand as he placed the reins between her fingers, accompanying the action with a look of such reverential admiration towards herself, and a gesture of such cunning caution towards John, that Lesbia could not feel as much offended at the liberty so taken as she believed she ought to have been. Bride was always warning her against allowing herself to be looked upon by the poor people round her as a possible source of favour independent of John; but what was the use of being an heiress—of all the money and power being really hers—if the luxury of dispensing patronage was altogether to be denied her, and no one was so much as to know that she was the

real queen? Lesbia believed the paper to be a petition, which she resolved at least to examine herself before referring it to the proper authority, till she brought the writing within the glow of the peat-fire and the light of the flickering candles, stuck on the high chimney-piece, that left the ends and corners of the large wainscoted room to dimness and shadows; then, glancing down upon it, she started, and threw herself into the low straw chair Ellen had drawn in front of the fire, with an exclamation between amazement and dismay. Yes, certainly, this sending her a letter privately by a servant's hand, and such a queer-looking, familiar, lame servant too, was a great liberty for Connor Daly to take. What would Bride and John say? What strong disapproval would breathe from all the grave lines of Bride's face when she heard! how satirical John would be! and how disagreeably their opinion of her easy deceivableness and vanity would creep out! What ought she to do? Give it to Ellen unopened, and beg her to return it to her brother? That would be the truly dignified maidenly course which neither John nor Bride could find a word to say against. And yet—and yet, Lesbia's eyes turned again to the bold curves and flourishes in her name written on the envelope, and all at once the objects surrounding her faded away, and a very different scene came up. The dusty panes of the little conservatory at Whitecliffe and the straggling branches of sweet-briar tapping them, on a windy summer day—herself seated on the stone steps leading from the house, with Mrs. Maynard's week's mending scattered round her, and an envelope with this same handwriting on it in her hand. What a strange whirl of feeling she had been in when she opened and read that letter. It had seemed like a voice calling her from the shores of an old country which she was in the act of leaving for something new. And now, the new did not look altogether so glorious, and the old was beginning to have a glow of tender recollections round it—not regret, that would be too ridiculous, but an enveloping sentimental haze, as of being hung round with all sorts of pleasant possibilities which actual experience had robbed of a good deal of their charm.

“Mavourneen wears the poorest gown.”

John might say what he liked about fortune-hunters, but that was written about her when it was only too true.

If she dare show that to Bride. Bride would have to acknowledge that it was not *only* being an heiress that made people think her charming.

“My thoughts are born in chains ; they move
All round and round her in one groove,”

that was the sort of thing real love was, Lesbia supposed. She leaned her dimpled chin on her hand, and looked fixedly at the fire. Brother's and sister's love—of whose satisfactions she had had such beautiful dreams when she had lived a little forlorn waif in her aunt's house—was not like that ; or, at all events, it was her thoughts that were expected to be born in chains, and to move round and round John and Bride in that deep groove of duty and self-culture and intellectual occupation which they prescribed ; and which certainly had a great deal of sameness and dreariness in it. If any other gayer privileges or more dazzling homage belonged of right to her youth and her heiress-ship—and, yes, her beauty—her two conscientious guardians seemed determined not to let her know it. Could anything be strong enough to break through the brazen tower of proprieties and cautions they had built round their poor little Cinderella princess ? Was there any knight at hand bold enough or strong enough to pierce even a small chink and let a breath of fresh air and a little music of flattery in ? The handsome knight, with the dark eyes that looked quite unutterable things, seemed to be more anxious than even the guardians to keep every chink of the tower in good repair. It might be gratifying to see him ride round and round, not able to keep away, though too spell-bound to challenge an entrance. But surely the spell ought to be broken some time, some kind of a catastrophe, some new element introduced into the scene, might be desirable. Life was too short now for enchantments to be allowed to last through a hundred years, and it was quite in accordance with all the old stories that letters should come to imprisoned princesses in unorthodox ways. A lame, slip-shod servant, or a talking bird, it did not much matter which was the postman. Lesbia had broken the seal and abstracted the letter from the envelope before

her thoughts reached this point, and now, while the candles, which had flickered in the draughty ill-built room down to their sockets, were giving out their last rays, she read—

“Oh, say, doth any flower blow
Meet to adorn my lady's brow?
The rose is pale with envy grown
To watch the tints her cheeks upon,
And with her beauty to compare
The virgin lillies shamed are;
Nor can she grace or sweetness get
From hyacinth or violet.
But though the flower doth not live
Which to her charms fresh charm can give,
Her beauty yet such power shall show,
To scorn the high and raise the low,
That worn by her this shamrock twine,
Shall seem an aureole divine.”

Lesbia turned the leaf, and a little garland of shamrocks, crushed, but still green, fluttered out on the hearth. She stooped and picked it up, and with rather trembling fingers—for just then there came a rap at the door, and she heard Ellen's voice summoning her to tea—she twisted the leaves in among the braids of her hair, which, in spite of Ellen's patient drying, clung in wet coils round her head.

She had not read the verses calmly enough to gather their meaning fully; but it was something flattering, about her being fairer than all the flowers in the world, and this green crown was a badge of sovereignty, and it was pleasant to wear it. How nice it was to be as beautiful and charming as the writer of these verses found her. And how cross of John and Bride to be always trying to persuade her that she was nothing but a sadly under-educated little girl, whom no one would notice if she were not an heiress. As she crossed the room, she stopped before a cheval glass in a corner to interrogate it as to what verdict it had to give between the two contradictory opinions. The fitful light of dying candles and ruddy peat-fire, with the dark background of gloom in the far corners of the room, gave the effect of looking down into mysterious depths at the fairy-like figure that seemed to be rising out of a sea of darkness and red fire. Long trailing pink robes hiding all but the points of the tiny feet,—a small flushed face above,—eyes like dark diamonds,—red lips that trembled into loveliest curves of pleasure as the eyes looked,—delicate

black brows,—a crown of soft dusky hair with points of green showing in it. Lesbia turned away, quite satisfied to bring that answer into the next room with her.

Eagle's Edge was an irregularly-built one-storied house, with no passage but the central hall; the bedrooms and sitting-rooms all opening into one another. Lesbia had only to turn the handle of her bedroom door to find herself among the party assembled round the supper-table. The room looked cheerful enough just then, in the glow of lamp-light and fire-light, with the table drawn cosily in front of the hearth, and a circle of animated faces assembled round it. Mrs. Daly invited Lesbia to a seat between herself and Pelham. Even she for once looked happy. The evening was always her best time. The contrast between the anxiety of the day and the satisfaction of having her son safe by her side within sight and touch was so great as to raise her naturally depressed spirits to a degree of cheerfulness she had not often known in more tranquil days; and to-night the sight of the well-filled table, and of Ellen and Pelham partaking freely of such fare as there was, the little excitement, too, of showing hospitality again, all helped to swell the measure of her content and make her positively gay. Gracious looks and words from her seemed to mean more and gave far greater pleasure than other people's graciousness. Lesbia felt a flutter of gratification and pride when she found herself addressed kindly again and again, and when once or twice her replies called up on her hostess' face the rare beautiful smile that Mr. Daly had prized so highly. John observed the unusual attention bestowed on Lesbia, and cast one of his quick criticizing glances that way. What could he be thinking of, Babette wondered. A provoking consciousness tingled into her face under his eyes, and she felt as if the shamrock wreath in her hair was pushing itself into undue prominence, and the note in her pocket burning her, almost as if she feared he could read it through the folds of the pink silk.

It was not like the merry evenings of last summer, when Lesbia had come into the Dalys' house after a picnic or a sail, to join in the evening meal, and had been thankful to sit in the background under Ellen's wing, listening to the extravagant mirth and wild jokes Mr.

Daly and Connor originated. There would never be mirth like that among them again; yet they were far from a silent party; and once or twice Ellen caught herself up in the midst of a hearty laugh, startled by the thought that it was the first time gay talking and laughter had been heard in that house since they came to live there, and wondering what the dingy old walls thought of the sound.

When the meal was over and the table pushed back into the dim, half-lighted region of the wide room, the party drew their chairs in a circle round the hearth, and the conversation gradually took a graver tone. Lesbia went round and seated herself by Ellen, perhaps with an idea of disarming John in case he should be disposed to criticize the amount of low-toned talk she and Pelham had indulged in at intervals during supper-time—perhaps from a secret persuasion that the folds of pink silk and peach-bloom cheeks, and brilliant eyes that had looked at her from the depths of the mirror, would be seen to greatest advantage from the other side of the hearth-rug, with the fire-light playing on them. Not that she was so wholly occupied with these as to fail to notice one or two things that passed on the opposite side of the fire, and to be touched by them in a region of her heart which the surface-flutter of self-occupation and vanity had not yet invaded. She saw the wistful looks Mrs. Daly turned on her son when John began to talk business with him, and she admired the patient tact with which Pelham replied to all the querulous objections her anxiety prompted her to make to every plan that involved a lengthened ride, or a late return home in the evening; not arguing or giving way, but soothing her by reassuring explanations, and sometimes, when explanations seemed only to aggravate the nervous terror, by a caressing hand laid on her shoulder, and a word or two of remonstrance in a tone that had a touch of authority in it.

"I can't help it, mother; I have got this business to do: and you would not have me always id'ing in the house, would you?"

"I ought not to expect it of you; but, oh! Pelham, if you knew what I suffer when you are away, if you would but remember——"

"I never forget it, mother."

The words were spoken low, but Lesbia heard them, and noticed that Pelham took his mother's trembling hand in his as he spoke, and gently stroked the thin fingers, till the nervous twitching in them ceased, and Mrs. Daly was content to lie back in her chair silent while the rest of the discussion went on; finding a certain peace in the strength of will that checked the unreasonable exactions she could not herself control. Her son managed her better than her too yielding husband had done, and gave her over-busy heart more rest. John thought, with livelier gratitude than he had ever felt before, of Bride's self-control, that through anxious months had saved him from having to add the harass of constant recollection of fears at home to the harass of distressing business abroad. Lesbia softly put up her hand, and disengaged the shamrock wreath from her hair, and looked with a sigh into the fire as she wondered, vaguely, whether it would be nicer to be loved by a person who could put his admiration for you into verses that people would talk about, or by one who could hardly say in so many words whether you were pretty or not, yet, who did the sort of things that made people trust and look up to him. Before she had come to any conclusion on this delicate question, the silence that had fallen on the group when the business discussion closed was broken by John's turning to Mrs. Daly, and preferring the request which had, he said, brought him and Lesbia to Eagle's Edge that evening. He was obliged, he explained, to go up to London on business connected with his literary occupations, and must remain in town a great part of the summer; he wished to take Bride with him, as her health had been rather failing lately, and she dreaded the spring winds; but Lesbia was anxious to remain at Castle Daly a little longer, till he and Bride had taken a house somewhere in London and were settled for the season. If Mrs. Daly would consent to stay for a few weeks at Castle Daly, and take charge of Lesbia till he could return and take her to England, it would be doing them all a great kindness.

John hesitated a good deal over the wording of his request, as if he had not quite realized how great a favour he was asking, till he found himself picking out words for it, with Mrs. Daly's dignified figure before him and Ellen's

questioning eyes reading his face as he spoke. He wished they would not keep him waiting so long for an answer. Pelham had looked pleased, even eager, for the first moment, and then came the gradual stiffening of features and figure, which John, from the last eight months' experience, had learned to recognize as the attitude he took when he was considering how most effectually to quench an offer of help or kindness that he looked upon as an attempt at patronage. Lesbia proved a better ally in the difficulty than he had expected: she crossed the hearth-rug, and, seating herself on a footstool at Mrs. Daly's feet, touched the folds of her dress to draw her attention.

"It would be coming back to your own house, you know, dear Mrs. Daly, with only me in it, and I would try not to be in the way; you were so kind to me last spring that I hoped you all liked me a little."

It was Babette who was speaking now, not Miss Maynard—the timid, coaxing, humble little Babette, of whom John and Bride only had occasional glimpses. Still there was no answer, only a deepening of the frown of pain on Mrs. Daly's brow.

Lesbia went on as if she were talking to herself. "Castle Daly is a great deal nearer Ballyowen than Eagle's Edge; when John goes there to attend the relief committee, or for any other business, he is home again by five o'clock. I ride there and back with him several times a week; and when he is likely to be detained till after dark, Bride and I drive into the town and bring him back in the carriage; we like it so much better than waiting at home."

Mrs. Daly's eyes, which had hitherto been staring at some imaginary distance over Lesbia's head, suddenly came to life again, and looked down into the glowing little face upturned to hers: it was only for half a second that the two pairs of eyes met, for Lesbia's curled black lashes swooped down and hid hers instantly; but there was time for some lightning current of electrical fellow-feeling to pass between the two, which made their owners secret allies from that time forth.

Mrs. Daly's manner changed instantly. She sat upright in her chair, turned her face towards John Thornley, and signified her acceptance of his invitation with frank and cordial thanks.

"It would be an effort," she acknowledged, to visit her old home under the altered circumstances, but the pleasure of being of use to such good friends would outweigh any pain. She was glad the plan had been thought of, and agreed to it joyfully. Pelham's objections were all overruled, and he soon let it be seen that his opposition had not arisen from any personal dislike to the visit; only Ellen remained silent, and no one but John noticed the perplexed expression that deepened on her face, as she sat apart looking steadily into the fire while the others discussed details.

"I am afraid you don't like the prospect of going back to Castle Daly," he said, at last.

"No, I don't," rousing herself with a great sigh, and turning her face towards him. "Of course I don't like going back there now; but that is not what I was thinking of. Just now it does not seem much to matter what one likes or dislikes."

"I wish I had consulted you and found out your wishes before I spoke to other people."

"Yes, I wish you had;" then, seeing an expression of surprise on his face, "you think me very selfish, don't you, for wishing that I could have put a stop to a plan that pleases mamma?"

"I think you see some objections unknown to the rest of the family, and I am hoping that you mean to tell them to me."

"You could not do me any good."

"You can't tell the help I might be till you have tried."

A smile as at some very incongruous idea flitted across Ellen's face, and she said, hastily, "*You*—but indeed you are the very last person." Then, seeing how his countenance fell, she added, "I did not mean it unkindly; I don't doubt your kindness; only that in the particular difficulty I was thinking of just then, you are the last person whose help I could ask."

"I wish you would make the experiment."

Ellen shook her head, and turned again towards the fire.

"Can't you trust me?"

He was grieved when she looked at him again, to see that she had been winking away tears.

"I think I had better hold my tongue, I so often say

more than I mean when I do speak. I was accused to-day of making mysteries, and that came of talking. When one can't tell the whole truth, it's better, I find, to say nothing, even if it leaves one with ever so heavy a weight of responsibility on one's mind."

"I am sorry you have responsibilities you don't share with any one; it ought not to be."

"I can't help it."

"The truth is, you are working too hard. The work that has to be done is trying enough to tough, resolute people, and you identify yourself too much with the sufferers; you let them drag upon you. I am glad you are obliged to go away."

"I am only one person, and it's hundreds who want me here."

"They won't be neglected; there will be just as much given away. Does not that satisfy you?"

"You should not ask me, because I told you I could not explain my real difficulty to you."

"I am afraid it comes from a consciousness that you have been too indulgent. Indeed, I was preparing to bring an instance before you of the way you are imposed upon. Do you know what became of that half-crown which you, in spite of our rule against giving money, bestowed on Mary Joice a week ago?"

"Yes, just as well as I see you do. She told me herself this morning how she spent it."

"I hope you were properly angry. Come now, won't you allow that this instance of the harm that comes of breaking rules ought reasonably to reconcile you to giving up the management of such impracticable people as Mary Joice into stricter hands? When a whole neighbourhood is in a state of starvation, is it right to trust one silly woman with a sum of money that would have fed herself and all her neighbours for a week?"

"On Indian meal."

"Yes, on Indian meal. More substantial fare, at all events, than Mary Joice's half-crown's worth of holy water."

"Mary Joice bought something else with her half-crown, Mr. Thornley—something that she showed me this morning in her eyes—she bought hope with it, and I don't

grudge her my last penny for that. It will make your Indian meal go a great deal further."

"Such pitiable folly! You would not encourage people to comfort themselves with false hopes, would you?"

"I don't know. I suppose you would not; you are a sensible person, and really wish to know all the disagreeable things that may possibly happen to you in your life. You would not thank anyone, I suppose, for helping you over a very hard time by giving you a gleam of happy possibility that was not sure to come true."

A week or two ago he would have said No decidedly; but, looking into her face, a doubt seized him; he was not sure that he might not come to the point of infatuation of wishing those lips not to put an end to groundless hopes.

Mrs. Daly rose to say good-night a few minutes later. While she was exchanging last words with Pelham and Lesbia, John, who by a law of his nature gravitated towards anything readable there might be in any room he was in, spied out Connor's newspaper which Ellen thought she had hidden away among the litter of her work-table, and began to read it, guided in his selection of passages by the emphatic lines that scored the pages. He was just going to burst out in energetic expressions of dislike to what he read, when his attention was caught by some fainter marks that lay thickest in one corner of the paper, and raising it to the light he discovered what they were—large heavy blots of tears that some one had shed while reading. The pain that shot through him like a knife at the thought of whose tears they were, was not altogether the pain of pity; there was a mixture of indignation in it, against the influence, whoever it was, that recklessly exposed so sensitive a heart to such fruitless emotion. Ellen came back after accompanying her mother to her bedroom to wish him good-night, while he was still looking blankly at the blisters on the paper, not reading any words, seeing nothing but the ragged blotches hardly yet dry. She was not very well pleased to observe what he had got hold of.

"I suppose it is just impossible to keep a man's hands from a newspaper," she said; "I thought I had put that one out of sight."

"I beg your pardon, then, for disturbing it; it is best

out of sight. You pain yourself by reading such worthless productions. I would not let you, if I could prevent it."

"No more than you would let Mary Joice buy holy water."

"This is a much more serious question. Look here," he said, pointing to a sentence in the speech Connor had scored. "It is not water they are talking of buying their vain hopes with, but blood. Have you read that? I don't want to make you needlessly anxious, but you must not encourage anyone you care for to identify himself with such sentiments as these. Do you realize the danger? It is absolute treason they are talking; and wild words in a time like this are too horribly mischievous to be overlooked. If you have any influence still with your brother Connor, keep him from connecting himself with these madmen. He used to send verses to this newspaper, did he not? Pray warn him."

"Unfortunately, to warn Connor against principles or people because they are dangerous, would be the very way to make him cling more closely to them."

"At least, don't you encourage him in his infatuation by showing him sympathy."

"Give me back my paper, please, Mr. Thornley. We shall not get any nearer agreeing about this if we talk till midnight. You are very much in earnest in wishing to rob Mary Joice and me of the poor little gleams of hope we are trying to live by. You would throw as black a shadow over us as Lac-na-Weel throws on Eagle's Edge, if we listened to you."

"If I could shelter you from false hopes, and the bitter disappointment that must come of them, I should not mind your calling me a shadow now."

Ellen looked up, surprised at the earnestness of his tone; and Lesbia laughed—she was a little afraid of her clever, satirical brother, and that anyone should presume to argue with him was a triumph for her.

"I will risk the bitter disappointment, and go on hoping for Ireland and her heroes as long as I can, I think," said Ellen; "for here is a token of hope lying at my feet." She stooped and picked up the shamrock wreath that Lesbia had let fall.

"See, this must have dropped out of the folds of the

newspaper that came from Dublin. I recognize Connor's handiwork here. It is meant for me to wear, and shows that *I* am to put the Green above the Red, at all events."

"It does not belong to you, it is Miss Maynard's," said Pelham, who had just joined the group; "she wore it in her hair at tea-time."

"Yours, Lesbia!—but where did you find it? It must have dropped from Connor's newspaper. I don't believe anyone but he would have patience to make such wreaths."

"Yes, where did you find it, Lesbia?" repeated John, who had noticed the sudden rush of colour that suffused Lesbia's face when Pelham spoke.

"What does it matter where I found it?—it is only a little, crushed, faded thing." And Lesbia snatched the wreath hastily from Ellen's hand and threw it on the fire.

There was a little blank space of silence, while Lesbia kept her averted eyes steadily fixed on the green wreath, that would not smoulder all at once into blackness on the peat-sod where it fell, but curled up its leaves and showed all the careful plaiting and tying of the tiny stalks beneath. Pelham sent distrustful glances at Ellen, who stood with brows knitted in thought, and John took in the disturbance on all their faces with much surprise. He spoke first.

"I don't mean any disrespect to the shamrock," he said, "but if I were you, young ladies, I think I would avoid either wearing it or burning it just now, when people may be disposed to put more meaning on your doing so than would be convenient."

"I am sure I don't care what meaning anyone puts on what I do," cried Lesbia, struggling out of her confusion to meet all the looks turned on her, with an air of petulant defiance.

"But if people were tempted to suspect a mystery that you could explain by a single straightforward word," said Pelham, in a low voice, coming up close to her, and trying to catch her eye again as he spoke, "you would explain, would you not?"

She put out her hand to wish him good-night without looking up. "I am sure I don't know what we are all talking about; we meant to say good-night half an hour ago."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Lo, here what gentilnesse these women have
If we colde know it for our rudenesse ;
How busie they bee us to keep and save
Both in hele and also in sicknesse,
And alwaye right sorry for our distresse :
In everie manere thus show they ruth
That in them is all godenesse and all truth."

—CHAUCER.

THE rain had ceased by eleven o'clock, and John Thornley and Pelham turned out to smoke a cigar in the garden before going to bed. Neither was in the mood for conversation, and Pelham, after venting some grumbling against mystery-mongers, retired to the house, but John lingered full half-an-hour longer. The peat-fire Ellen had lighted was waiting for him in his room; but in spite of his promise to like peat-smoke for the rest of his life, he found the fresh, soft air more soothing and fitter for bringing his thoughts into order. The heavy clouds had broken up into great silver-edged continents and islands, separated by deep seas of blue, through which the full moon sailed majestically, and into which, while John looked, Lac-na-Weel lifted his head bare. The rest of the valley and the lower hills lay in patches of cold, misty light and dark shadow. John, with his mind fixed on the events of the evening, saw all without noticing any particular feature of the scene, till his attention was drawn to a small moving light, a yard or two from the garden, that seemed to hover over a cutting in the bog. Was it a Will-o'-the-wisp light? or had he not been half unconsciously watching it for some time receding slowly into the distance till it stopped there? His curiosity became roused at last to the point of throwing away his cigar, vaulting over the low garden wall, and walking towards the appearance. Once across the road he was in uncut bog-land, and his feet sank deeper and deeper in the wet spongy turf at every step. He was just beginning to remonstrate with himself on his folly in pursuing Friar's lantern into a swamp, when a sound of voices reached him; he strode on another yard, gaining firmer footing on the top of a little knoll, and then

he could see plainly. There was a cutting in the bog, five or six feet deep, some distance before him, skirted at the sides by little piles of turf; and, partly hidden by these piles, partly showing plainly in the moonlight, he perceived two figures—a woman with a cloak over her head, and a man, deeper in the shadow, who, as far as he could make out, was crouching or kneeling before her. While he looked, the woman stooped as if to speak to her companion, and in raising her head again the cloak fell down to her shoulders, and a streak of moonlight displayed a mass of golden braids that could belong to nobody but Ellen Daly. At the same moment the wind brought again a murmur of voices: a guttural, moaning sound, and then the clear, sweet tones he would have known among a thousand. One step more forward, and he could have distinguished the words,—but he could not bear the thought of spying upon her. He folded his arms and stood still, determined to wait where he was for the chance of being wanted, but to approach no nearer. He waited some time in the cold, long enough to come to the conclusion that if Irishmen had courage and determination to match those of Irish girls, the schemes of Connor's friends need not be desperate after all.

Ellen would have cut shorter the conversation she was engaged in, and suffered more trepidation while carrying it on, if she had known who was watching her. The expedition itself was one to which she had become accustomed, having undertaken it every two or three days for the last six weeks, but to-night it brought her a painful shock of surprise and pain. She had crossed the strip of bog-land quickly, knowing by experience how to avoid the swampiest spots; and having reached the stacks of peat-sods, she put her heavy basket and the lantern down on one of them, and called, softly, "Molly;" there was an instant's delay, and then a bent, wasted figure, that looked like a mass of moving rags rather than a man, crept from the dark shadow of the cutting. Ellen recoiled a few steps, with a gesture that even in the dim light expressed shuddering horror and avoidance of what she saw. The man gave a faint moaning cry, as of a creature struck in the extremity of pain, and, throwing himself on his knees, crept after her and clutched the skirt of her dress with

both hands ; then lifting his right hand towards the light, he cried, with a little sob of excitement and exultation in his weak voice—

“Miss Eileen, Miss Eileen, look, I’ve done it. I always tauld thim I would ; and no one will ever dare to say again that it was my hand fired the shot that killed Squire Daly ; for would it not have withered black before it could have touched a thread you wore !”

Ellen hesitated a moment, and then, throwing back the cloak so as to show her face, she stooped towards the crouching figure at her feet and held out her hand.

“There,” she said, “it is not enough to touch my clothes ; but I don’t think you will dare clasp that, if yours has his blood upon it.”

“It has not, God hear me !” said the man. “But any way, I’m a sinner, and not fit to touch your hand, Miss Eileen. I’ll tell ye the whole of it now as I would to a priest. The lot fell on two of us for the job we had to do that night, but it was a boy from another part of the country that fired the shot that killed him. We were behind the wall that skirts the road at that end of Lac-na-Weel pass, you know of ; and when we heard horses’ hoofs we got ready. The moon was under a cloud just then—bad luck for ever to it for the same. Dark as it was, I saw, and dropped my gun ; but the other boy, who did not know either of the gentlemen by sight, was too quick for me. He got away to his own people, who have no grudge agin him for the mistake, but I can’t get away. The neighbours protected me and hid me at first, as they were bound to do, but now they all turn agin me and hate me, for they think that night’s work brought the curse, or keeps it on us ; and indeed, why would it not be so ? It would not be much to starve meself, but it’s thim that belongs to me—the mother, and the wife, and the childer—that cry out for help, for bit nor sup, nor a drop of cauld water, will any hand give us but your own.”

“Why did you come here to-night instead of Molly ? It is much less safe, and I had rather see her.”

“It’s a turn of the faver that’s on her, and my wife is that wake wid nursing the baby and starving, that she could not have crawled the length of the way in a month, or I would not have come. I’ll not come again—we can

die, all of us, since you don't believe me, and the sight of me hurts yer eyes."

"I do believe what you have told me, Dennis; but I can't forget that if another person had ridden along the road that night you would have been a murderer; and I am afraid you have not repented of your intended crime—that you hate your enemy in your heart still; that is why I drew my hand back, why I cannot offer to touch you again."

A dark, wild look convulsed the man's face, upturned and white in the moonlight.

"Miss Eileen, I do hate him. I would not have been as I am now if he had let me alone."

"You can't tell that, Dennis. Does not being hated by your neighbours unjustly yourself make you feel how unjust it is to hate Mr. Thornley as you do?"

"Why would it, then?"

A puzzled, helpless expression came into the eyes that were raised towards her face, and with the pity it brought, a sudden recollection flashed into Ellen's mind. He was right: it was not experience of hatred but of love that was needed to extinguish hate.

"Dennis, I have forgotten something," she said. "I have a message to give you. When my father lay dying, he told me to tell you, if I ever saw you again, that he forgave you his death. He must have recognized you when you lifted him up and carried him into your cabin. But he avoided mentioning your name, and only made me understand."

The man, who had never let go his hold on Ellen's dress, now relaxed his grasp, and sank down to the ground in a heap, hiding his face in the earth and moaning.

"He thought I did it, then; he thought I did it. He died wid that in his mind. I that he'd been generous and good to all his life, and that would have died for him."

"But he forgave you—he sent you a message; and, Dennis, though it tears my heart still to talk of that night, I will tell you something more. He said he was glad you had killed him instead of Mr. Thornley—that the other murder would have been the greater crime; and now, knowing that, don't you think you owe it to him, and to us who have been robbed of him, to put all evil intentions out of your heart against the man whose life he was glad

to purchase with his own? It would be killing my father twice over to touch him now. You must promise me, Dennis."

Ellen stooped as she finished speaking, and held out both hands to lift the prostrate man from the ground.

"Miss Eileen, Miss Eileen," he groaned out, resuming his kneeling posture at her feet, "I'll not desave you any more than I would a priest. I had it in my heart to be avenged wid the last grain of strength that was in me. I meant to have gone to-morrow to the valley by the Holy Well and turned Lac Fecheen¹ against him in the name of the devil, and then I'd have had him in my power, and it would not have been many days afther that before I'd have waylaid him somewhere, and he would not have escaped me that time. I meant to have done for him before I died; but now I'll die like a dog, laving him that's wronged me to prosper—to plase you."

"Like a Christian, Dennis, to obey God."

"Eh, I will, or I'll bring your father's double curse down on me from heaven, you think."

"People don't curse up in heaven, Dennis; but you would cut yourself off from him for ever, and from our Lord, who died forgiving. There, give me your hand, and we will kneel down and say the Lord's prayer together, and I'll take that as your solemn promise that you'll never undertake anything to anyone's hurt again."

They knelt down on the grass side by side, and Ellen slowly repeated a Pater Noster, pausing every now and then, and looking steadily at her companion's face, to make sure that his lips formed the words after hers. She did not feel any fear or any sense of the strangeness of the situation; she was wholly absorbed in the consciousness of being engaged in a momentous struggle, spirit with spirit, which involved the saving of a fellow-creature's life, perhaps by God's help, the rescue of a soul from the dominion of evil. She was too deeply in earnest to have a thought to spare for personal fear. It was only when the effort was over, and, having risen from her knees and dismissed Dennis with the basket of provisions she had brought for his family she stood watching his figure receding across the bog, that she was aware of the extreme

¹ The stone of fate.

exhaustion such a contest leaves. Her limbs were trembling so that she could scarcely support herself, and the distance that stretched between the spot where she stood and the house seemed interminable. It did not lessen her agitation, that, when she had dragged herself beyond the shelter of the turf-stacks, she perceived the dark outline of Mr. Thornley's figure upright and motionless on the knoll between her and the house. She had to stand still to control the beating of her heart, and to keep herself from fainting, and then she perceived that he was moving forward, coming to meet her; and the anxiety that seized her to increase the distance between him and Dennis as much as possible gave her strength to quicken her steps. He had determined to meet her in quite a commonplace way, and leave it to her to explain the occasion of her late walk if she pleased.

"I took you and your lantern for a Will-o'-the-wisp, Miss Daly," he began, "and as I have always been ambitious of making the acquaintance of that historical personage, I followed you. Not beyond that knoll, though. When my Jack-o'-lantern resolved itself into a lady with a lantern I stopped."

She longed to ask him if he had recognized any one but herself, but the words she tried to form died away in gasps on her lips. Shocked at the state of agitation he found her in, he drew her hand within his arm without another word, and walked on for some distance, supporting her as much as she would let him, and carefully avoiding so much as a glance at her face.

When they were entering the house he spoke again: "Miss Daly, if I had any authority over you I would not let you do such things as this—no, not if the alternative was half the people in the neighbourhood starving."

"How shocking," she said, in a voice that trembled still. "But you are not thinking of what you are saying. You don't know what I have seen and heard to-night."

"You ought not to be exposed to such sights and sounds. I am more glad than I can say that you are leaving this place for a time; if it had not been so settled, I should have been obliged to tell your brother about this."

"I would never have forgiven you if you had."

"That would have been very hard to bear, but it would

not have been so bad as your hurting yourself. You must not think that you are the only person in the world that can make sacrifices, or that no one is ever to make them for you."

They had entered the house now by the back door. The place was silent, but not quite dark; there was a rush candle burning in a niche by the door, and the glow of the embers made twilight still in the low-raftered kitchen. John Thornley led Ellen in there and drew a chair forward towards the fire, into which she was glad to let herself sink. The shuddering horror and faintness, which she had been struggling against ever since Dennis left her, came upon her again in full force, now that the goal she had fixed her mind on attaining was reached. She could only cover her face with her hands and give way to the trembling that shook every limb. "Don't mind," she managed to whisper softly between the spasms of shuddering, "don't call anyone, don't let mamma be frightened, I shall be better soon. It was just seeing——" And again the dark wild face rose up before her, and overpowered her with horror; the wasted, feverish hand which to her thoughts would look bloodstained, clutched hers, and again she seemed to be battling with the power of an evil purpose, and imploring heavenly aid to exorcise it. Gradually the paroxysm of nervous terror passed away, and a sense of peace and victory came, restoring her to full self-possession. She uncovered her face and leaned back quietly in her chair to rest before she rose to go to her room.

John Thornley had had the tact to leave her alone to recover, and had employed himself in putting fresh sods on the fire and coaxing them to a blaze.

"Can I get you anything now?" he asked, coming nearer when she looked up.

"I don't want anything, thank you. I am quite well now, and will wish you good night and go back to mamma's room. She likes me to keep about as long as Pelham is up, and to see that all is safe before I go to bed; but she will expect me now it is getting late."

"Your mother is exaggeratedly anxious about Pelham's safety; but how is it she lets you run such risks? I can't understand your being allowed to expose yourself to danger without anybody's interfering to prevent it."

"But there is no danger for me, it is you that don't understand the difference between one person and another here. I run no risk. It was not fear that made me so silly just now, it was only the pain of something I had to do."

"You must never do such a thing again."

"I don't suppose I shall ever need to do it; but oh! you don't know how thankful I am that I did go out to-night."

She had only been thinking hitherto of the evil deed that had been averted; now, as she looked up into John Thornley's face, a more definite image came. It was this man's life that had been, as it were, given to her that night. She had saved him from a treacherous enemy who had planned his murder. And he stood there looking at her with an expression of devotion in his eyes almost as if he understood that he owed his life to her. Something in his face, at that moment, recalled to her mind an expression she had once noticed in Bride Thornley's eyes while she was looking at her brother, and the remembrance of the sister's affection for her brother raised her own thankfulness to vivid joy. It was well, it was well indeed, to have saved the life of a person who was so much loved—it must be worth saving. From this time the brother and sister would have a new interest for her; she should never look at either of them again without a renewal of this moment's joy and thankfulness.

John saw the glow of feeling dawn and brighten in her face, restoring colour and life to it. Her eyes, full of happy light, met his without a shade of embarrassment or self-consciousness in them as she wished him good night. He did not at all understand what the look, so simple and so fervent, meant, but it thrilled him to the bottom of his heart with happiness. If he never got another such look, he thought, he could live on the recollection of this to the end of his life.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Yea, thou shalt learn how salt his food who fares
Beside another's board ; how steep his path
Who treadeth up and down another's stairs."

PARADISO, XVII.

"How will it look to them, do you suppose, Bride?"

The Thornleys were momentarily expecting their guests, the late owners of the house, for the first time their visitors in it; and during the last half hour John had severely tried Bride's patience by fidgeting about the library and drawing-room, spying out and quarrelling with all the little added touches of ornament which Lesbia, to the yet greater trial of her patience, had spent the entire morning in devising and carrying into effect.

She looked up a little sharply from her work, when John addressed her.

"My dear John, how can I tell? If your and Lesbia's principal anxiety about the house is that it should look homelike to the Dalys, you should have thought of that before the new furniture was brought in. It is quite impossible, I assure you, now, whatever you do or undo, to bring back the old look."

"If my experience is any rule for them, and I think it is," said Anne O'Flaherty, who was seated on the other side of Bride's work-table, in the recess of the newly thrown-out bay window, "the completeness of the change will be a great relief. They are just now dreading a stirring up of old memories, but when they are once shut into the house, the surprise of its transformation will drive other thoughts away, and they will be spared pain. I doubt whether I could have borne to spend so many hours here as I have done this winter, or whether you would have found my head so clear for business, as you are pleased to say it is, if I had not found the sight of your grandeur and luxury very hostile to dreams of old times."

"Luxury you do call it then?" cried John; "and that is just the impression I rebel against creating. To say nothing of the absurdity of sober caterpillars like ourselves

turning into gaudy butterflies, there is the bad taste of our doing it in such a time as this. It will look very heartless to some people."

"There is nothing absurd in caterpillars turning into butterflies that I ever heard of," remarked Bride, dryly; "and as to the house, you agreed with me that Lesbia should have her own way about furnishing it. What has happened to alter your opinion since?"

"One does not set up to be infallible, I suppose," said John, turning away; and Bride's eyes, that had been raised to his with a keen question in them, fell back on her work.

In a minute or two Anne O'Flaherty came round to Bride's side of the work-table, and put an arm across her shoulder, while she leaned over her and discussed the measurements of the poor-garments they were making together; and Bride looked up at her gratefully, willing that she should perceive, and sympathise with, the discomfort which even this slight approach to altercation between herself and John caused her.

This was one of the results of that winter's troubles, the springing up of a warm friendship between these two women, who had neither of them been much thrown in the way of feminine companionship hitherto, and who had sufficient unlikeness in their characters to have begun their acquaintance with considerable mutual repulsion. Hard work for other people, and the daily witnessing of suffering they were equally anxious to alleviate, had been the bond that had drawn them near enough to look through the outworks of unlikeness, and discern the wide meeting-ground of agreement behind.

Anne, the more sympathetic and deep-sighted of the two, had found a yet closer tie between herself and her new friend. She had made a mistake when she said that she had passed much of her time at Castle Daly that winter without being tempted to recur in her thoughts to old times. There had been a good deal of retrospect in her moods, but it had not been the old places that had called it back; it was the subtler interest of living over again through sympathy some of the mental conflicts she had carried on in the same spot years before. The circumstances had been different, but the training through

which Bride Thornley was passing was the same—the training of having to sit still and see the person she loved best in the world, to whom her sympathy and companionship had hitherto seemed all-sufficient, drawn away from her towards a more absorbing love, leaving her to stand alone in the old place. There had been a time of such withdrawal of old accustomed affection in Anne's life; she knew the signs of the suffering it caused and its danger. She knew that women to whom Providence appoints a solitary lot have to come, when early ties are broken up, to a turning-point in life, when the prospect of being henceforth first to no one—second, or perhaps nothing at all, to those they have loved best—has to be faced, and that the manner in which this crisis is met determines generally whether they are to sink or rise for ever in the scale of being—sink to a level of narrower interests, of pettier loves and cares, and hates, than belong to ordinary womanhood, or rise to an outlook of far-reaching sympathies and capacity for unthanked service that endows them with a foretaste of the selfless joys of the angels. Having passed through such a valley of humiliation herself, and come out at the right end, Anne was glad to be at hand to give such little aid as an understanding onlooker knows how to offer silently to a fellow-traveller on her way.

Bride Thornley had no idea that the struggles of her soul were in any way open to her friend; they had never exchanged a word that seemed to bear on the subject, but she had a sense of being comprehended and helped that was comfortable.

The mere touch of Anne's hand soothed her irritability just now, and helped her, when John came back to their side of the room, to resume the conversation without that note of sharpness in her voice that had driven him away.

"I believe we have done nothing but make mistakes all through," he began again. "It is all incongruous. My eyes are open to-day, and I see the hideousness of our doings. I wish we could conjure everything back to look as it did four months ago."

"Oh, John, and don't I wish I could conjure everything *not to look*, but to be, with ourselves as it was four years ago?"

"I don't say that."

"I do; I quite agree with my namesake, Bridget Elia, in thinking that being well off is a very uninteresting state of things, and in longing for the good old times again when we were poor and enjoyed ourselves. Have you ever read Elia's delicious essay on old china, Anne? Yes?—then I can make you envy us. John and I were as poor once as Elia and Bridget in their good old times. Like them, we two used to lengthen out the lives of old hats, and coats, and bonnets (don't I hold some of them dear in my memory !), that we might buy books and prints with the money that ought to have gone in new ones. That lovely old Morghen print of the Madonna della Seggiola cost John the wearing a napless hat and me the going without gloves a whole year. The evening we hung it up in its shabby frame over our chimney-piece in our dark London lodging we read that essay together over our tea, and we walked about (or at least I did) on mental stilts for days after, hardly knowing whether we were not Charles Lamb and his sister instead of ourselves, or, at all events, feeling as if they were hailing us as congenial spirits from somewhere. Now we have come down to wearing superfine broadcloth and fresh silks, and moving about among furniture that have nothing whatever to do with each other, and scarcely more with ourselves, since the furniture came by waggon-loads from Dublin shops that we don't even know by sight."

"That's just what I am complaining of," struck in John. "It's an upholsterer's house—not ours. We have turned the place into a mere warehouse."

"Not quite that," said Anne, looking down the long room lined with bookshelves to the vista of conservatory beyond; "but I am of opinion myself that it takes at least a hundred years and the influence of a generation or two to make a big place into a family house. One or two people can turn a small house or a few rooms into a congruous shell for themselves in a few years; but if you want to fill a large space you must take time to grow into it."

"After all," said Bride, with a sigh, "it does not greatly concern us. We are only here for a time, taking care of Lesbia's house till the right guardian comes. In a few

years we shall hang up our Madonna again over some chimney-piece somewhere, and set about secreting a suitable shell for ourselves. John will never be allowed to wear shabby coats and hats again ; he is too well-known a person now, and his work is too well paid. But if he marries, and I find myself a supernumerary in the establishment, I shall let myself gradually sink or rise into congenial shabbiness again. No one will mind."

She looked at her brother as she finished, anxious to read by the expression of his face what he thought of the picture she had drawn. She was quite sure, by the far-away look in his eyes, that a vision of the new home was before him ; but if there was any expression on his face it was one of annoyance.

"Of course it will come to something of the kind in a year or two," he said. "But you need not trouble yourself with so many suppositions, Bride. When you and I settle to our life work in some London home, there is no likelihood whatever of your not being first in it." He had asked himself and answered, that not for any consideration in the world, if he had the power, which he never should have, would he bring Ellen Daly to pine in such a cage.

"Where is Lesbia?" he asked. "I hope she means to be in the way when our guests arrive."

"No fear but she will, she feels the dear importance of acting hostess far too deeply to miss any of its duties. I wish it had not happened to occur to her that the best way of doing honour to her guests is to receive them with great state. I can say nothing to dissuade her from her elaborate preparations, for Mrs. and Miss Daly are much more her friends than mine, and she professes to know their taste."

"She may be right about Mrs. Daly," said Anne. "She is used to a good deal of formality."

"But," hesitated John, "there are other members of the family very unlike her, to whom the old ways of the house seemed to belong."

"If you are thinking of Ellen, I believe you may trust to her seeing nothing for the first hour beyond my face. It was certainly a very good thought, your starting off this morning to fetch me. I wonder how you came to have it."

"Ah! there," cried John, "there are the carriage-wheels, and the commotion that announces an arrival at Castle Daly is beginning. Now, Bride."

"No, no, John, you forget; you and I are to keep in the background; it is Miss Maynard's house, and there she is, coming down stairs to receive her visitors. Let her enjoy herself. She has been three-quarters of an hour dressing for the situation. But how is this? I left her arraying herself in her newest Paris costume, and she appears in one of the old despised Whitecliffe dresses. What is the child thinking of?"

"If Connor Daly were coming, a caprice like that would make me anxious," whispered John to Bride, as they stood in the library doorway and watched Lesbia's progress down the hall; "but as it is only Pelham, who takes no more notice of Babette than if she were a doll, we must put it down to sheer love of change."

"Why not to more refinement of feeling than we gave her credit for?" returned Bride. "She is quite pale with excitement, poor child. The Dalys were kind to her in her Cinderella state, remember. I am glad she felt at the last moment that she could only welcome them in her old Whitecliffe attire."

After all the anxiety of the three hosts to do the honours of their house gracefully, the most prominent part in the welcoming fell to Anne O'Flaherty's share. Mrs. Daly put up her heavy crape veil when she saw Anne waiting in the hall, and hurried towards her, her poor pale face so working with emotion that when they met she could only throw herself into Anne's arms and sob on her shoulder. It was just there that Anne had stood to receive her when she had entered the house a bride with her husband twenty-five years before. She had been jealous of her influence then, anxious to put an end to her intimacy in the house, for fear it should interfere with her own rights; but now, how wretched the old barriers and heartburnings looked when they two stood the only companions left who could enrich each other with recollections of what *he* had said and done in the old days. All misconceptions fell before that thought, and they felt that, whatever had gone before, it is people of the same generations who in great sorrows and losses can best comfort each other.

Ellen stood by, full of joy at the unexpected warmth of her mother's manner to Anne, and content to wait her turn till Mrs. Daly had turned to Lesbia with apologies for her emotion. Then she seized Anne's hands.

"How much better than I had hoped—how good of you to come here."

"I did not come—I was brought," Anne said; and on this hint Ellen all at once remembered her real hostess, and turned to Bride blushing and eager to make up for her own and her mother's remissness.

"We are so grateful to you for having such a kind thought."

"Not to me—for I hadn't it," said Bride, bluntly; it went against the grain to give the explanation, but honesty obliged. "It was my brother, who went to Good People's Hollow this morning without saying a word to anybody, and brought her away almost by force."

Ellen did not feel disposed to offer a third time the thanks that had been twice rejected, but she looked up at John as she passed him to go up stairs with the light of pleasant surprise still glowing on her face.

"It was very clever of you. Do you know," she said confidentially, "I begin to think that in emergencies you are the person who knows the right thing to do?"

Begin to think! The sentence sounded audacious to Bride, but it was quite enough to make John feel foolishly happy all the rest of the evening.

Mrs. Daly did not come down stairs again, and escaped the pang of seeing little Lesbia occupy her old place at the head of the dinner-table; and Ellen was so engrossed in hearing news of the Hollow from Anne, that she hardly noticed where any one sat. It was quite otherwise with Pelham. The prospect of returning to Castle Daly as a visitor had not troubled him beforehand. He had been to the house several times since his father's death, and the changes in it were quite familiar to him. Yet it was he who was the real sufferer on that first evening of the old possessors sitting as guests in the family rooms. He was the person to whom the trial brought all, and more than all, the bitterness that might have been anticipated from it. It was he who, in every morsel of food that passed his lips, ate the bitter bread of exile and humiliation. He

had not cared for the old home as the others had cared for it ; there had been times when he had despised it, and after his long absences in England hated to come back to it ; yet, even then, there had lurked at the bottom of his heart a certain pride and joy in the feeling that it was his ; that it belonged to him as unalterably as the sun to the sky. Visions of his early days came back to him that evening, with the hazy glory hanging round them that belongs to half-remembered childish scenes—of the days when he used regularly to be mounted on his father's shoulder, after breakfast, to make his morning rounds with him to the stables and dog-kennels, and when a babyish whim of his always found a dozen dependents eager to carry it out : of the times when he rode through the villages on the estate on his pony by his father's side, and the people pressed out of the cabins to look at him and call down blessings on his head. He had felt like a prince then ; it had been nothing to him then that his subjects were in rags, and the grandeur and state had all been slipshod. It was the worst part of his pain now that the discovery and the consequent contempt had come later, for it made him feel as if his present sense of loss and longing was a punishment—a weird sort of revenge which one part of himself was taking on the other. If he had always been loyal to his own home, he fancied he could have let it go with more inward dignity. At least, he should not have felt the present appearance of the house, realizing as it did his discontented dreams in past times of what it ought to be, such a bitter mockery as he felt it now—a Tantalus vision put so close to him, that it seemed as if the least movement of his hand would grasp it, and yet utterly beyond his reach. For a few moments in the course of the evening Pelham tried to turn the pain out of his mind by giving himself up to a day dream. He was not much addicted to day-dreaming, but just now the vision seemed made to his hand, and instead of inventing anything, he had only to forget. He was seated a little apart from the rest of the party, in a window-recess of the well-lighted, tastefully-furnished drawing-room. Bride Thornley was playing soft music on the grand-piano at the far end of the room. Anne O'Flaherty and Ellen occupied a sofa by the fire ; and Lesbia Maynard, in her old pink muslin dress, of Whitecliffe

memories, sat meekly on a stool at their feet. It might have been last year, or rather one of his visions of last year, realized by an enchanter's wand. This was home; his father's house, to which he was heir; not as it ever had been, but as he used to see it sometimes in his thoughts, while he dreamed of the day when he would ask a certain little penniless girl to share it with him. It was his taste and care that, for her sake, had brought together all the comforts and elegances he saw round him. She was on a visit to his father and mother, and to-morrow he was going to speak to her and tell her of his love. She would lift up her dark eyes surprised and grateful; a low hesitating voice would answer sweetly. She would think only of him: but he should look round proudly, glad to have so much to offer—such a worthy casket to enshrine his pearl. That was such a natural reading of the picture his eyes rested on; to make it real, so little undoing, so little forgetting was needed, that, in spite of all the pain the reaction would be sure to bring, Pelham let his thoughts stand still before it, to contemplate it a little while.

“Mr. Daly”—the voice of which he had been dreaming, just as soft and meek as he had been fancying it, woke him from his reverie. Lesbia had left her foot-stool, and tripped across the room to the window-recess—“Mr. Daly, I want you to come into the conservatory to look at some new plants I have just had sent from Dublin, and advise me about placing them.”

The dream fell shattered into a thousand pieces, and Pelham got up to follow with an inward groan, feeling as if every nerve of his body had been bruised and wounded in the concussion of the fall.

Lesbia paused once or twice in her progress across the drawing-room to draw his attention to objects they were passing. “That picture over the sofa was my present to John and Bride at Christmas. It is a Landseer. They fell in love with it when it was exhibited in London years ago, and when I read in the *Art Journal* that it was again to be sold I secured it for them. Was not I lucky? That mosaic table, with the doves, and the marble statuette of Psyche, belonged to my great uncle, and came to me from Florence after his death. You must come a little this

way to see the Psyche to advantage. Some people think it very beautiful—John does.”

Young Mr. O’Roone, when Lesbia had introduced him to the Psyche a few days before, had found something flattering to insinuate about the disadvantage that marble Psyches were under when animated ones stood near. Lesbia could not help wondering whether any thought of the kind would by chance occur to Pelham Daly, and she stole a glance from under her eyelashes to see if there were any trace of it in his face. He was not looking at the Psyche with any favour, but neither was he looking at her. Lesbia was not quick enough to read the sensitive pained pride his carefully-composed features expressed, but she felt chilled and mortified, just as she had often felt at Whitecliffe in the early days of her acquaintance with the Dalys, when Connor and Ellen made much of her in their impulsive wild way, and the standing aloof of the dignified elder brother gave her the impression that she was to blame somehow, and had committed herself to something silly. She felt just as she had often felt then, that she could not bear to come to the end of the evening without having gained some little token of homage from the quarter whence it was hardest to win, to restore her self-complacency. They had to pass through a vestibule, connecting the drawing-room with the conservatory, that had lately been decorated and furnished with orange-trees in tubs.

“Look there,” said Lesbia, standing still before one of these, and pointing upward to a moth-eaten stuffed elk’s head surrounded with a decoration of rusty spears and old double swords that occupied one side of the wall. “Those curious old things were left behind in the hall when the old furniture was taken away, as not worth moving. I had them taken down carefully, and put up here after this wall was painted, because I thought your mother, all of you perhaps, valued them—and it is nice to keep something that was here before. How do you think the old elk’s horns and the armour look among my orange trees?”

“Very much out of place and very shabby, I think they look,” said Pelham. “You had much better turn them out after their original owners; if the poor things could speak they would remonstrate on the cruelty of being put

up in their old places to act as foils to new importations. I pity them myself."

"I thought you would like it," Lesbia said, timidly. "We are only tenants here, you know, and your people have lived in this castle for hundreds of years. When you come back here to live——"

"I never shall. I know now that it is impossible. The misfortunes of this year are too overwhelming to leave us any hope of making head against them. We must go down. Let every scrap and shred of a memory of us be put away; it is the best thing that can happen. I stay in this neighbourhood at present for my mother's sake and for Ellen's, but I hate it. If I could, I would go away to the furthest part of the earth and struggle to forget all here as hard—as hard as a swimmer struggles who is fighting for his life."

The words were spoken low, but Lesbia looked up frightened at the vehemence with which they came out, and at the sort of angry light in the eyes that were fixed on the mouldy relics far above her head.

"Would you really wish to forget everything quite?" she said. There was the appealing, injured baby-look in her eyes that used to come in Whitecliffe days, when Wattie tore her dress or Bobby pinched her, the sight of which had made Pelham tingle with indignation and desire to interfere in her behalf often and often. He caught the look as he was turning to walk away, but it did not stop him—it was only another sting added to the multifarious pains of the evening. He had awakened from his dream with a start of fear at something most repugnant to his pride, which such dreaming might bring him near, and the only thing to be done was to shake himself roughly free from every trammel of illusion. The bell rang for evening prayers just then, and Bride, as she came forward towards the upper end of the room from the piano, happened to observe Lesbia's entrance from the conservatory, and was surprised and a good deal amused at the dignified height to which she had drawn her small head, and the air of general proprietorship of the whole house with which she seated herself by John's side at the reading-table while the servants filed in. Lesbia was unusually talkative when, after prayers, she and her guests

stood in a group together discussing plans for the next day, and surprised Bride again by the sharp tone in which she contradicted some assertion of Pelham Daly's, and her pertness to John when he came to the snubbed young man's rescue, and tried to prove to her that she was in the wrong. Bride thought she had cured Lesbia of Missish airs caught from Aunt Joseph; and was dismayed at a relapse on this first occasion of her being thrown with old acquaintances again.

But her chief surprise came later in the evening, when on going, as was her custom, to take a last look at her sister asleep in bed in the room next her own, she discovered that the round rosy cheek she stooped to kiss was wet with tears, so were the soft dark curls that strayed on the pillow. Greatly disturbed, Bride put down the candle and knelt by the bed. The child crying herself to sleep in her own beautiful prosperous home—what could it mean? She lingered a moment, hoping that the heavy wet lashes would be lifted up, and that her sister finding her near would confide to her the trouble, whatever it was, that weighed on her mind. She had reason to suspect that the sleep was only pretended; but the appearance of unconsciousness was persevered in, the eyelids remained tightly closed, and she had to get up and go away unsatisfied. At all events, little Lesbia's troubles could not lie very deep, Bride said to herself; and she hoped it might be other people's sorrows, not her own, that had called forth the tears. She herself had knelt long that night thinking of their guests, and praying that the widow and orphan son and daughter who had come back to a home desolate for them might be comforted. She had had to struggle hard with her heart as she prayed, lest a grudging reservation should creep in respecting a compensation which she believed to be awaiting Ellen, and which in her thoughts so far surpassed her loss that it was difficult not to envy instead of pitying her. She had tried to pray: "Let all the treasure of the thoughts and tender love of the heart in which I have reposed so long be made over to her, to comfort and enrich her life for ever; and let me learn how to be poor in earthly love;" and she had succeeded at last in winning the glow of disinterested love, and the peace that comes to those who

arrive at hating their lives and finding them again. The sight of little Lesbia's tears seemed a rebuke to her for her struggles. They no doubt had welled forth freely; without any self-regarding reflections or far-seeing grudges; from pure pity and tenderness, showing how near the child's heart is to God. Before she fell asleep Bride took herself severely to task for having ever looked down on little Lesbia. It did not occur to her to suspect that any other struggle with chilled affection, except of the kind she knew, could be going on near her. Her experience of sorrow had all been in one direction, and she was not fanciful. If it had been Connor with his winning ways, and openly-shown preference for Lesbia, who had come to the house that day, she might have been suspicious; but to suppose that her little sister could cherish a secret regard for one who seemed to avoid rather than seek her would have been an outrage to her sensitive proud maidenliness.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Oh woman of three cows, agraph, don't let your tongue thus rattle;
Oh don't be saucy, don't be proud because you may have cattle.
See where Momonia's heroes lie, proud Owen Moore's descendants;
'Tis *they* that owned the glorious name, and had the grand attendants.
If *they* were forced to bow to fate, as every mortal bows,
Can *you* be proud, can *you* be stiff, my woman of three cows?"

Translated from the Irish Mangan.

AFTER her last night's reflections, Bride was quite ready to acquiesce good-humouredly, when her brother suggested at breakfast that the journey to London, on which they were to have started the following day, should be postponed till the end of the week, to give their guests time to settle in comfortably, before they were left to Lesbia's care. She was longing for change, for her health and spirits had suffered much from the winter's hard work; but she saw that her consent to remain was received as a great boon by him, and that reconciled her to waiting. She reflected that it might not be long that the granting or refusing favours, on which John's heart was set, would remain in her hands. Her anxiety to gratify him extended

so far as to make her take every opportunity that occurred of being with Ellen, and she tested her own generosity by speaking a good deal of John, and taking care that when the cabins were visited and the arrangements for distributing food among the starving people were discussed, all the good results due to his foresight and capacity for administration should be pointed out. She could not speak of John without praising him, but hitherto it had not been her practice to speak often of him; the partnership between them had been too close; she would have felt it like praising herself. Now her sense of proprietorship in him was passing away, she had fairly seen that the joy of his good deeds and the pride of his talents might come to be another's treasure, even more than her own. It was, perhaps, a help that Ellen did not seem in any hurry to take possession. She was first critical, then surprised. It was not till she and Bride were returning from the village, where they had spent the greater part of the morning in going from cabin to cabin, that she grudgingly made her first admission.

"You are good managers; there is not nearly so much misery here as in the hovels round Eagle's Edge, and yet you have only used the same means to meet the distress that you have supplied to me. You must have put more thought and care into it, somehow."

"And authority," put in Bride.

"Yes," hesitated Ellen.

"Don't be afraid of saying exactly what you feel," said Bride, noticing a shade of disapproval in Ellen's face.

"Well, don't be vexed at my saying it, but, necessary or unnecessary, I would not have said what you did to Biddy Flanagan for throwing those few grains of Indian meal to her chickens."

"Few grains! It was a handful. What did I say?"

"You said it was sheer dishonesty; that she was stealing bread from the mouths of her neighbours' starving children."

"So she was; all waste of food is robbery of the starving just now."

"But it hurt Biddy dreadfully. She has the kindest heart in the world, and would do anything for her neighbours if she thought of it, and she has always been

famous for honesty. She was crying under her shawl all the time you were looking about."

"I was looking about to ascertain if the precautions against the fever we insist upon had been properly carried out. If she has such a kind heart as you say, and cares for her neighbours, she will show it better by attending to the rules for preserving the health of the place than by crying at a word. I am afraid her tears won't prevent her wasting part of the next measure of Indian meal served out to her, and coming back clamouring for more before the proper time."

"No, because, you see, she does not believe what you said; she only thinks you very unjust. She knows she is neither cruel nor dishonest, and she looks upon Indian meal as a sort of horrible stuff sent here in unlimited quantity by government to punish them somehow for their potatoes having failed. She will throw away the next basinful she can lay her hands on with energy, as a protest against the injustice of your opinion of her."

"She is very ungrateful, then, to think more of my opinion of herself than of all the efforts she sees us making for her solid benefit. She ought to put aside any harshness there may seem to be in my words (which after all only call things by the right names), and trust us from seeing what we do. That is what I should call reasonable."

"Ah, but we are not made like that," cried Ellen, "we Irish people. English or Scotch people may be reasonable enough to thrive on solid food, given with heart-wounds and stabs to their pride along with it, but we can't."

"Do you mean that you can't take either medicine or food unless it is sweetened by flattery?"

"We cannot thrive on it if it is soured with disregard and contempt. But please excuse me; I did not mean to apply that to anything you have done. I have been looking on all the morning amazed at your kindness, and the people ought to be grateful. My thoughts flew off to larger questions as you spoke, and I was wondering how it is that this foreign charity food is so bitter to those that eat it. Why, we long so that we could have been fed with the abundance of corn our own land brings forth,

and that seems, by some machinery we can't understand, to be spirited away from us."

"Ah, your younger brother writes in the *Nation* newspaper, and goes in for its politics, does he not?"

"Yes, and you are not the person to quarrel with a sister for being of the same opinion as her brother," said Ellen, smiling.

Bride could not quarrel with the smile, it was so sweet, though there was a gleam of mischief in it. "I won't quarrel with you," she answered; "but, putting politics aside, I should like to persuade you to modify your last statement. Surely, it is very unsafe to make pride and sentiment the gauge of acceptable benefits. They are dangerous guides, and might lead us to throw away the truest affection and most earnest kindness, labouring for one's highest good, if prejudice came in the way."

"I know the sort of kindness labouring for one's highest good you mean," cried Ellen. "I have experienced a good deal of it in my life. Its chief function is to make one feel oneself a worm, thankful to creep into any hard shell to get out of its way. It may be a very good sort of affection, but it just kills me."

She was thinking of Pelham Court, but Bride of course did not know that, and there was a pained gravity in the tone in which she answered "I am sorry to hear you say that," which puzzled Ellen.

They had reached the garden gate by this time, and Ellen stood still to look at the house. The outside, though it had undergone some repairs, was little changed; and just at the moment there was a bustle going on in the court-yard, and a sound of rising voices that brought back old happier times to Ellen's memory. Lesbia's handsome new phaeton had been brought out of the coach-house to be washed, and a concourse of ragged boys and men from the roadside, where they had been working, had collected to watch the operation and assist with suggestions and the occasional more active contribution of a shower of water energetically thrown over wheels or cushions, as it happened, from whatever vessel they had chanced to snatch up. The men were sadly weak and starved-looking, and many of them were sitting down wearily on the upturned wheelbarrows they had brought with them into the yard,

but every now and then a shout of quavering laughter rose up.

"Did you ever see anything so childish?" cried Bride, in despair. "The least thing tempts them away from their work. Every day since the new carriage came we have had the same scene. If John were here, he would have to be very angry."

"But he is not here, and you must not be angry; it is such dull, useless work the poor boys come from—spoiling the green hill-sides with roads that we none of us want, and that we shall always hate to see—and it's nothing but Indian meal they'll get for doing it. You must not grudge them the little bit of respite that comes in their way; it does me good, if no one else, for it takes me back to the times when we could not have anything new without all our neighbours round sharing the benefit by getting some amusement out of it in some way."

"Your mother found the irregularity and the interruptions very trying, she tells me; and I confess so should I. I like everybody to mind their own business."

"By degrees, I suppose, we'll learn. I say *we*, because I always identify myself with the Castle Daly village people. I can't help it. We'll learn to attend everyone to his own concerns only, and to take advice and whatever else we can get from our betters without troubling ourselves to give back any interest in their doings in return."

"And then you'll begin to prosper."

"And to be dull and discontented and selfish."

Bride laughed as she shook her head. "I can't allow that those are necessary results of hard, independent work," she said. "You have a very one-sided way of putting things; but I have a glimmer of what you mean. John was saying something like it a few evenings ago. The sort of interdependence and mutual affection and interest between rich and poor you look back upon is a remnant of the old clan feeling, and has, no doubt, a great deal of beauty and poetry about it. I can understand the revolt you feel against its being merged into the hard individualism of the stage of society that has to follow. It looks ugly in the first stern form of struggle it has to take, but it must come and work out into its own good. You shall talk to John about it."

"I sha'n't understand him if he translates my 'good times' and 'bad times' at Castle Daly into 'stages of society' and 'laws.' I won't be made to look at things on a large scale, for then he and you are sure to get the better of me. I shall insist on going back to where we started from—the tired men sitting on their wheelbarrows and enjoying the washing of Lesbia's carriage—and say, as I have always said, that I could never bear to think of Castle Daly without Daly's Corner hanging on behind it, and finding its chief solace, and all the amusement and glorification of the life lived there, in the connection. I don't see that one has the least right to exist without the other. I suppose it is the clan feeling I have got, but I do in earnest think there ought not to be great places or very beautiful things unless a whole company of people are to share at least in the glorification of them. So much ought not to be shut up and hedged round for the delight of two or three. If everybody lives to himself, and only represents himself, then everybody might be comfortable, but there need be no grandeur."

"We are getting into mazes of political economy, I am afraid, and had better wait for John to lead us through. There is your mother coming to meet us with Lesbia."

"I wonder what they are talking about that so interests mamma. She looks quite animated. Lesbia knows how to amuse mamma better than I do; I wish she would teach me her art," said Ellen, with a tone of self-reproach in her voice that made Bride look at her with more complacency than she had felt before. She was not quite invincible then; everybody did not put her first.

Lesbia had persuaded Mrs. Daly to take a turn in the flower-garden, to see how the bulbs were coming up, and how the shrubberies were improved by the weeding and planting out that had gone on through the winter. She perceived quickly enough that Mrs. Daly was not affected by the sight of the improvements as Pelham had been. She liked to have them pointed out to her, and the implication running through Lesbia's talk that she had not worked for herself, but towards the time when the owners would return to the Castle again, met with no contradiction from Mrs. Daly. Neither she nor Lesbia troubled themselves about the exact bearing of what they

were saying to each other. It was only in this strain that Lesbia could speak while pointing out her improvements to the old mistress of the place; and it was so pleasant to fall into it, that she would not vex herself with even a remote glance at the conditions which only could make her words come true. If it was a day-dream they were making for themselves, the old lady of the Castle and the young one found equal satisfaction in upholding each other in it, so that no consciousness or questioning was allowed to creep in and imperil its foundations.

When they had finished the round of the garden and pleasure-grounds, and were slowly pacing the sunny terrace with its view across the head of the lake towards the Maam Turk mountains, Mrs. Daly, to her own surprise, found herself opening out to Lesbia on recollections of the first years of her life at Castle Daly, and of Pelham's childhood. It was the sight of Lac-na-Weel's dark head, for once free from clouds, which Lesbia happened to remark upon, that made her begin, and the interest in the girl's brown eyes tempted her on to a fuller account than she had ever given any one else of what she had suffered long ago, when her eldest son at six years old had strayed away from home and been absent for fourteen hours. Ellen was a baby then, living with her foster-nurse in a cabin at the foot of Lac-na-Weel. Pelham had been carried to see her once or twice, and, taking advantage of his nurse's carelessness, he had slipped from the house early one morning, and set forth to find his way across the mountains alone—a sturdy, fearless little fellow, used to climbing, and hard to turn back from anything he had set his heart upon. He had been missed some time before anyone had the courage to tell her; and then what an agony it had been to bear the slow passing of the hours, and the return of one party of searchers after another with no news. No one had chanced to guess the direction the child had taken, and of course everyone's thoughts turned to the lake at once, and she could not help seeing how little hope most of them had, and that the search was half pretence with the greater number who went. She was ill at the time, and not allowed to leave the house herself; and she told Lesbia that she believed her dislike to Castle

Daly arose from the painful associations that the views from all the windows had with that day's watchings. She could never afterwards see the shadows of the clouds flitting over the hills, or watch the waters of the lake deepening into the glow of sunset, without recalling the horror in which that day had gone down. At last, long after dark, a tall, strange, wild-looking man had brought the child home, with the story of how he had found him gathering bog-berries on the edge of the precipice that gained the mountain its ominous name, because no shepherd ventured to pasture his flocks on that side of the hill for fear they should fall over and be dashed to pieces. Mrs. Daly paused with a shudder at the long-past danger.

"And then it was all over, and how happy you must have been," said Lesbia.

"But, my dear, it was not all over, and that is why my thoughts go back to that day so often, tracing onwards from it so many of the troubles of my life. The man came up those steps (I was standing at the top) with my boy on his shoulder clutching his elf-locks with his little hands, and whether it was that the poor child was afraid of being scolded for running away, or whether the man had fascinated him somehow, I don't know, but for a minute he clung to him and would not get down even to come to me. I shall never forget what I felt—the devouring anxiety to have him safe once more in my own arms out of the keeping of that dreadful wild man. For he was a dreadful man. I shall never forget his face as he stood under the light in the hall with Pelham clinging to him. I knew him by report; he had a bad character, and was living in the mountains almost as an outlaw. Of course we rewarded him amply; but that did not satisfy him. He seemed to feel as if he had a sort of right over the child because he had saved his life, and he would hang about the Castle even after I had warned him to keep away. He used to meet Pelham out on his walks when he got a little older, and tempt him to make excursions into the mountains with him, and offer him presents; once it was a young eaglet that he had taken out of its nest on the top of Lac-na-Wheel. I could not overcome the horror the association gave me, and I had no peace till I had persuaded Mr. Daly to send Pelham

to England and let him go to school with his Pelham Court cousins and spend his holidays with them. That is how it came about that Pelham had a different bringing up from Connor and Ellen, and that he has lived so little in Ireland. I thought I was doing the best for him, but I often fear now that I made a mistake. If I had controlled my dread of Dennis then, there might have been fewer difficulties in Pelham's way now."

"But is that man here still?"

"I dare not ask. I know there are suspicions about him that I must not allow my thoughts to dwell on. It is bad enough to be always saying to myself that if I had only let Pelham be brought up as Connor and Ellen were, he would now be as much beloved here as they are, and I need never have feared for him."

"But he might not have been what he is if he had been brought up differently," Lesbia ventured. "He might not have been so much to you."

"Ah, there it is. I brought him up for myself, not for his own happiness in the place where he has to live. He has never had a real home. Ellen and Connor cling together, and he is left out. I feel the hardship to my very heart. I long to see it made up to him, to get him among people who will find him out and appreciate him."

"There are such people," said Lesbia, very low: "my brother and sister."

"Yes," said Mrs. Daly, "that is why I feel so much at home among you, and happier than I have felt for months. You must forgive me, my dear, for troubling you with such a long-past story. Here is Ellen coming from the village: she will be jealous when she hears how long I have stayed on with you."

"Yes, indeed, I am jealous," cried Ellen, who had now come near enough to hear the last sentence. "Lesbia, you must be a witch. I always suspected it, and now I know. There must have been a four-leaved shamrock in the wreath that came to you by post the other evening."

"Mrs. Daly has promised to come out with me after luncheon," said Lesbia, triumphantly. "She and I are going to drive together to Ballyowen to fetch the gentlemen home when their weary relief committee business is

over. I sent a servant to bring back their horses, so they have no choice but to come with us."

Ellen might easily have been jealous of the lovely smile of thanks Lesbia got from Mrs. Daly in return for this speech, if she had been able to feel anything but delight at seeing her mother look so nearly happy again.

"How considerate and womanly the child is growing," Bride thought; "and surely she gets prettier every day. John could not call her eyes brown beads if he saw them just now. Her manner to Mrs. Daly is just what it ought to be, so prettily reverential and affectionate, and yet too simple to call up any consciousness of their changed positions to each other. I need never fear again that riches are spoiling her. I must make John admire it. He shall not be so lost in contemplation of that other person's charms, that every good quality in his own people escapes him."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"She should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her;
There are plenty men you call such,
I suppose she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them;
But I'm not so, and she knew it,
When she fixed me glancing round them."

R. BROWNING.

LESBIA was an early visitor to Mrs. Daly's room the next morning with a bunch of violets from her own flower border, and the news spoken demurely, but with a little gleam of conscious mutual understanding creeping out from under her eyelashes. "I have persuaded John to consider this a sort of holiday. They are not going to ride to-day, or to look after anything. They are writing letters in John's study now, and reading newspapers, and soon we are going to walk. Ellen has promised to take us by a path she knows over the hills to a little lake where we shall get water-lilies out of the way of the cabins and miserable sights just for once. I thought it would do John good."

"And me," Mrs. Daly said, drawing the bright face down to her and kissing it: "you don't know how much good you are doing me."

Lesbia had managed to take Mrs. Daly's heart by storm, and get nearer to it than anybody had been known to do for years; the bystanders noticed the friendship with wonder, not having divined the secret sympathy that united the pair.

"Do you remember this day last year?" Lesbia asked Ellen, when the two girls were standing in the hall equipped for their walk, and waiting till the library door at which they had rapped several times in vain should open. "Can you tell me what we were all doing this day last year?"

"Of course I can, because it is Connor's birthday," said Ellen; "but I wonder you remember the day. I think you did not spend it with us."

"No, but I can tell you exactly what I was doing. You had invited me to sail with you in the afternoon and come back to dine. It was the first invitation to dine out I had ever had in my life, and oh, how proud I was of it. I dressed to go; and just as I was leaving the house one of Aunt Joseph's grand friends (the people she called grand, I mean) came in a carriage to ask her to drive, and my aunt ordered me to take my bonnet off and stay at home, because, as she would be away, I was wanted to look after the children. I spent the whole afternoon in picturing what you were all doing, and made myself miserable with the contrast between you and myself. At night I put a little cross in my almanac to mark the day, and as I wrote it I wondered whether I should be more or less unhappy when the same date came round again—whether anything particular would have happened to me. Did you ever do such a thing?"

"No, I don't think I ever did. I used to be too happy to want to look forward."

"Well, it was seeing that little cross in my pocket-book determined me to make an expedition with you to-day. I thought it would be a charming answer to my last year's question. Nobody will order me to take off my bonnet and shut me up in the house this year. Dear Ellen, have I vexed you by talking of last year? I wish I had been more considerate."

Ellen passed her fingers lightly over her eyes, and then looked up smiling.

"No, I am not vexed ; for a moment I thought how glad I should be if some one who used to give me orders could come through that door, or up those steps, as he has so often done when I have been standing here, and tell me to do—oh, anything for him ! But, Babette, I am determined I will not spoil our walk by low spirits. I know you did not plan it just for the sake of making amends to yourself for last year's disappointment ; you are as clever as other members of your family in making yourself out selfish when you are really kind. You wanted to secure mamma an easy day by keeping Pelham with us, and perhaps you thought too of gratifying me by honouring Connor's birthday. I have kept it ever since I can remember, by some pleasure expedition ; and I may tell the poor boy, mayn't I, that he was not altogether forgotten this year at Castle Daly ?"

"I don't know how it would be to tell him," said Lesbia, demurely. "Here, at last, come John and your brother. Now we may set out."

Ellen's resolution to enjoy the walk was put to a severe trial before they had taken many steps up the steep road. Mr. Thornley, who was walking by her side, turned to her, and remarked in a tone that was meant to be indifferent, but was really full of anxiety—

"You hear from your brother Connor frequently, I suppose ?"

"I had a long letter a week ago," Ellen answered, as steadily as she could, while an uneasy vision of Connor detected in some imprudence in their own neighbourhood filled her thoughts.

"He wrote from Dublin, of course ?"

"Yes, of course."

"Why don't you turn my questions back on myself, by asking why I ask ?"

"Because I feel sure if you want to tell me anything you will ; and if you don't there's no use in my asking."

"What an opinion of my obstinacy you must have—quite erroneous, let me tell you. I hesitate to speak because I am afraid of alarming you needlessly, though I think I ought to give you a warning."

"Then please say anything you know of Connor at once."

"It is not important, though worth mentioning, perhaps. Some men were taken up by the police last night for being found out on the hills at a later hour than is allowed by the new Vagrancy Act, which is very strictly enforced in this district just now, and in the course of their examination this morning a good deal was brought out concerning two emissaries from the Dublin clubs, who have been holding secret meetings down here, and collecting the people on the hill-sides for drill at night. One of the men, who was either very stupid, or who wanted to be bribed to tell more, let drop your brother Connor's name. The other prisoners united in swearing that the two gentlemen they had gone out to meet were perfect strangers, who had never been seen by any one in these parts before; and there was an attempt at explanation or mystification by some of them volunteering the remark that one of the strange gentlemen was so like your father that maybe it was a spirit, and no gentleman at all, that had harangued them on the hill-side. The police magistrate seemed satisfied, and so in fact was I; only when you are writing to your brother you may as well let him know how thorough the vigilance is in our neighbourhood, and that his friends would be wise to withdraw while they can in safety, and carry on their play at preparations for rebellion elsewhere."

"Mr. Thornley, you should not have said that word 'play.'"

"Why not?"

"Don't you think that when people are miserable, and angered, and desperate, and told their death-struggles are play, it is enough to goad them into terrible earnest? It is just those contemptuous sayings that do so much harm and sow more bitterness than actual wrong."

"I did not mean it for contempt. I am paying a tribute to Young Ireland's common sense when I call the threats her representatives are flinging about mere play. I cannot suppose them to be so mad and blind as to be in earnest. To dream of plunging the country into rebellion at such a crisis as this would be greater folly than one can conceive."

"We don't worship common sense as you do; and for

my part I don't believe anything great was ever done except when that idol of yours was tossed away. It is always in crises of trouble, out of great depths, that deliverance comes."

"Yes; but what you are looking for would not be deliverance, it would be destruction."

"You don't know anything about it."

"I shall begin to think you are the 'Eva' or the 'Speranza' who write pathetic treason in the *Nation*."

"Don't sneer at them, please. I have read verses of theirs that I should indeed be proud to have written."

"For your brother Connor's sake, I am very sorry to hear you say this. I shall hardly blame him for any lengths he may go to now. It is enough to make any one a rebel to hear you talk. You should be careful."

"Can one be careful when one's heart is breaking? The very blackness of the night forces me to believe that there must be a dawn coming."

"And so there is; though perhaps you won't recognize it as such when it comes. There will come some good out of the present misery, you may be sure. It is good for the country that the surplus population is driven away, even by stress of famine, to seek more prosperous homes elsewhere, leaving the land to be made the best of."

"Desolated that is,—turned into wide, silent, sheep-walks and great pasture-fields, with only dumb cattle in them from sea to sea. Everywhere roofless villages and deserted homes, and only here and there a few companionless people who have lost all instinct of nationality, guarding riches that are not their own. *That* would be your good; but that is just the fate we Young Irelanders are resolved to make one stand against before it is quite too late—one struggle to keep Ireland and her people together."

"You might just as well put up your hands and try to stop the sun in the sky. A country can't exist by itself in these days; it must consent to become what the rest of the world wants it to be."

"I will never agree to that. I think a country is for the people who love it best to live and be happy in, in their own way."

"Then would you leave America to red Indians for hunting-grounds and wigwams?"

"I shall not answer such an insulting question. We did not come out to quarrel, did we, Mr. Thornley? I thought it was to be for rest. We have climbed the hill while we have been arguing, and left Pelham and Lesbia far behind. Let us wait for them here at the top, for this is the view I want Lesbia to admire. Do you see my little lake—my water-lily preserve—down there, looking like a patch of blue sky that has dropped down and been caught and held fast by the hills? I am glad Lac-na-Weel wears his crown to-day; he looks so much grander covered. He might be any height up in the mist."

"Like Young Ireland's dreams, seen through the mist of eloquence you are wrapping them in. I don't so much wonder at people growing dreamy who live here, for there is glamour over everything. The very beauty of the landscape is made of cloud effects, mist-wreaths, and sunbeams. Through any other atmosphere it would be dreary enough, you must allow."

"If you will allow that it is some credit to a country to know how to get loveliness, like this we are looking at, out of bare rocks and bog lands, and such hopes as we have out of despair."

"Yes, if you could always be content with shadow instead of substance, and did not dash yourselves to pieces chasing one in mistake for the other."

"I think I like shadows best," said Ellen; "such shadows as those on the hills. I pity the people who have to leave them to live on some ugly, flat plain in America or Australia, let it be ever so substantial and fruitful."

There was a low stone wall skirting the pathway. Ellen seated herself on it as she spoke, and began to pluck the small ferns and stonecrop that grew among the stones, letting them fall absently from her fingers as fast as she gathered them. She was feeling much alarm on Connor's account, and had made a brave effort to talk unconcernedly to conceal from her companion the shock his information had given her. And now she was glad to relax the strain and take a silent moment to argue away her fears. How glad she would be to know that Connor was safe in Dublin. She almost smiled at her own inconsistency as she confessed to herself that it was only the distant view of conspiracy and rebellion she could look at with toleration;

when it came so near as to bring one's own friends into danger, then it wore quite another aspect. Mr. Thornley stood by her side, watching the changes in her face, which he thought revealed the coming and going of happy or sad thoughts through her mind as clearly as the mountain sides showed the passage of clouds across the sun, and owed, like them, its haunting beauty to the alternate lights and shadows. The leaves she let fall from her fingers brought back to his memory a passage from a tale of Madame Reybaud's, which he had overheard Lesbia reading aloud to Bride a few days before. It described a last interview between two lovers, where the girl, seated on the turf by her lover's side and telling him news that must separate them for ever, mechanically plucked and threw away as she spoke the blades of grass near her; and her lover, unseen by her, gathered them up as they fell from her fingers, to keep them for ever. He remembered how absurd and sentimental he had thought the picture, as he listened. How incredible it would have seemed to him, then, that he himself could ever be so infatuated as to value dead leaves because a particular hand had plucked them—a hand whose owner was certainly not occupied with any thought of him in her absence of mind. He had not come to that point yet. He was not coveting Ellen's fern-leaves, he assured himself. Just then a little puff of wind blew one of the tiny fronds almost into his hand. He closed his fingers over it quickly, and slipped it hastily inside the cover of his pocket-book; for just then Ellen woke from her reverie and turned round to speak to him.

"Do you see that winding road skirting the foot of the hill, and the lame man plodding along it? He is singing as he goes, and as he passed below us a minute ago I caught a word or two of his song. Would you like to know what it is about?"

"Yes—he has a fine voice; I caught the sound before he was in sight, but I thought it was Irish he was singing."

"So it is; but I can give you an English version of the words. It is a long poem, much sung about here. The words he is at just now are—

" 'Woe and pain, pain and woe,
Are my lot night and noon—
To see your bright face clouded so,
Like to the mournful moon ;

But yet will I rear your throne
 Again in golden sheen ;
 'Tis you shall reign, and reign alone,
 My dark Rosaleen,
 My own Rosaleen,
 'Tis you shall have the golden throne,
 'Tis you shall reign and reign alone,
 My dark Rosaleen.

" 'I could scale the blue air,
 I could plough the high hills ;
 Oh, I could kneel all night in prayer
 To heal your many ills.
 The heart in my bosom faints
 To think of you, my queen,
 My life of life, my saint of saints,
 My dark Rosaleen,
 My own Rosaleen ;
 To hear your sweet and sad complaints
 My life, my love, my saint of saints,
 My dark Rosaleen.

" 'Oh, the Earn shall run red
 With redundance of blood ;
 The earth shall rock beneath our tread,
 And flames wrap hill and wood,
 And gun peal and slogan cry
 Wake many a glen serene,
 Ere you can fade, ere you can die,
 My dark Rosaleen,
 My own Rosaleen.
 The judgment hour must first be nigh
 Ere you can fade, ere you can die,
 My dark Rosaleen.' "

" A strangely fierce love-song ! What does it mean ? "

" It is the 'Roisin Dhu,' the black little Rose ; and the black little Rose is Ireland, of course. The man singing it down there is Murdock Malachy, Anne O'Flaherty's servant ; so you won't suspect him of being a sworn rebel. Cousin Anne has great influence, and does not allow her people to belong to secret societies, but she can't keep them from singing. You see, the Young Irelanders are not far wrong in thinking that the old love of country is strong still, and might any day burst into a blaze."

" So much the more careful should they be not to put a light to explosive forces that have power certainly to blow them and all who trust them to destruction, but can do nothing else."

"If you knew how I hate to hear you make such cold-blooded prophecies !"

"Perhaps I should not have courage to make them ; the pain of vexing you for a moment might make me hold my tongue. But it would be selfish policy ; you would have no reason to thank me for it by and by."

Ellen had an answer ready, but looking into Mr. Thornley's face she saw something there that made her pause and turn quickly away. "Lesbia is getting into difficulties on that last steep bit of the path," she said, "and Pelham is too ceremonious to be of much use. I will run down and help her."

Ellen's cheeks were still flushed, and her heart beating quickly, when she succeeded in landing Lesbia in safety on the summit of the hill ; but she had not asked herself the cause of the sudden tumult into which her thoughts had been thrown by Mr. Thornley's words. She would not try to find out whether the feeling called up was pleasure or dismay, or only the unconscious sympathy which the sight of a grave face stirred by unexpectedly deep feeling could not fail to evoke. There were other questions that had to be answered first, and she fancied just at the moment that she could put this one so far away that it might never come to the surface to trouble her again.

In the difficult descent of the hill, the whole party kept together, Ellen pausing now and then to point out to Lesbia the chief landmarks of the scene spread out before them. The winding road that led to Good People's Hollow, the steep ravine at the foot of Lac-na-Weel, the principal peaks of the Green Joyce Hills and of the Grey Maam Turks, whence, in old times, the rival O'Flaherty and Joyce tribes swooped down to fight in the valleys.

"Like eagles on a carcase," Mr. Thornley put in, "tearing each other to pieces for the poor spoil of the bog-lands."

"No, for the fun of the scrimmage," said Ellen defiantly. "Poor mean-spirited creatures they'd have been for ancestors if they did not like fighting better than digging."

"And you think you don't want England to govern you?"

But Lesbia was soon too much occupied with the perils of the path to care to look about or leave any of her helpers time for conversation, and when they reached the

foot of the mountain she declared herself so shaken with her various falls, and so overcome with fatigue, as to be quite unable to continue the walk. The little lake that seen from the heights had appeared to be close under the hills, proved now to be at least a mile away, and Lesbia began to be plaintive over the impossibility of ever reaching it, or of climbing up the "horrible precipice" she had stumbled down, so as to return home again.

Ellen proposed that they should take the low road leading to the river, as Lesbia's heart failed her for further climbing, and suggested to Pelham that he had better walk on before as quickly as he could, to the boat-house at the head of the lake, and bring a boat up the river to meet them, and save them several miles of this longer route. Lesbia, seeing a regretful look on Pelham's face, was beginning to protest against breaking up the party, when Ellen surprised her by seizing her hand and giving it a hasty, mysterious squeeze.

"Yes, yes; you are very tired. Indeed, Pelham, you must go. We will rest here for half an hour, and then walk slowly on, to give you time to get to the head of the lake and back to the river landing-place before we reach it. But you had better set out at once."

When Pelham had left them, Ellen turned eagerly to Mr. Thornley—

"And now you will walk on to the lake, and get us some water-lilies, while we rest. It would be so very ignominious to go back empty-handed after coming so far. I could not bear to do such a thing."

"Just for once you might. I don't like to leave you and Lesbia alone in this solitary place."

"We are very comfortable. What could happen here to hurt us?"

"Some one might come and beg. Is not that the hood of a black cloak, showing above the stone wall, up there?"

"I see nothing but a red heifer's back."

"The cloak has disappeared this minute, but it was there."

"There may be a girl watching her heifer, but what then? Even Lesbia is inured to beggars by this time. And go back to Cousin Anne without the water-lilies I will not. So, if you decline the walk, Mr. Thornley, I shall have to go myself."

"Suppose I don't find any lilies?"

"You must bring some leaves to show that you have been really there, or we won't speak to you."

"If I go, I shall make all the haste I can to get back again."

"There is no need. Pelham will be quite an hour walking to the lake, and we may as well wait here as at the landing-place, and we had much rather be alone. Do go, Mr. Thornley."

"He has gone off in a huff," said Lesbia, as her brother walked away. "What did make you so determined, Ellen? You have frightened me, for I know you have a reason for wanting to be alone; you look so eager. What are you listening for now? I hear something—a voice singing down there. Oh, I must call John to come back; I am frightened."

"No, dear Lesbia, don't. There's nothing to fear. I did want to get rid of your brother, I confess. Some one is waiting for me down there with whom I must speak a word or two alone. You may well look surprised. I will explain afterwards fully, and only say now that it's news of Connor I expect, and Anne O'Flaherty's servant, lame Murdock, who will bring it me."

"But I don't see him—there's no one near."

"Yes, listen. The voice singing seems to come from under the ground, but the place we are sitting on is really the roof of a cave that runs far into the hill. The opening is in the hollow, to the left of us, under the rock ledge. It was once used as a still, and a rough shed was built out from the mouth of the cave, but you can't see it, because it is hidden by those tall piles of turf. I can scramble down to it in five minutes, and shall soon be back again."

"But do you mean me to stay here by myself?"

"Dear Babette, I would not ask it of you if it were not Connor's birthday. See, you will have me full in view till I reach the bottom of the hollow, then I shall disappear behind the turf-cutting for a few minutes; but if you put your mouth down to this crack in the ground and call very loud, I should hear you in the cave"

"And you will promise to tell me everything you see and hear when you come back?"

"If I can; and I'll be obliged to you all my life."

Lesbia had a spice of love of adventure and of mystery in her composition that over-ruled her timidity and induced her to consent. She felt like the heroine of one of her old foolish Whitecliffe dreams, when, after watching Ellen's disappearance under the hollow of the hill, she looked round on the solitary scene with a little thrill that had just enough fear in it to make it exciting. Pelham had passed quite out of sight, and John's figure had dwindled to a black spot in the green valley at her feet. Round her, on all sides, were solitary hill slopes, overlooked by dark, solemn mountain peaks. A large-winged bird was hovering high in the air above her head, whirling in great curves, and poising as if it were about to swoop down upon her. An eagle? Yes, it must be one of the eagles Ellen had told her of that had their eyry on Lac-na-Weel, and swooped down for prey on to the little islands in the lonely lakes. The thought made Lesbia's pulses beat wildly till a few rapid strokes of the wide wings took the black hovering body up, up, till it looked hardly bigger than a lark in the blue sky. Then she settled herself with her elbows on her knees and her chin between her hands, to wait and think, and forbid herself to grow frightened at her loneliness. She had a pleasant sense of self-importance to counteract the solemnity of the scene, which might otherwise have been oppressive, for had not one admirer just left her with a sufficient show of reluctance, and did not this adventure promise tidings of that other lover, who, at all events, professed devotion enough to satisfy anybody? Had she ever, in the old stocking-darning days at Whitecliffe—before she had ever seen anybody in particular, when the day-dreams were woven in and out to suit the fancies of the moment—invented any beginning of a story for herself more gratifying to self-love than this? Was she not now actually acting out her own longings? Babette heaved a great sigh as the question rose in her mind—a sigh that was a testimony to the pleasantness of the old dreams, and to the much paler colours in which reality was painted. Ah, yes; but though it had come, it was not what she thought it would be. She had not imagined it all round. The dream-people who loved her gratified her vanity, and that was all. They never puzzled her, or made her anxious, or by anything they said awoke in her heart that trouble-

some yearning sympathy so much nearer pain than joy, that she was ready to wish it away even while she watched for the words and the looks that brought it. In her dreams it would have been to the eager, outspoken, gay-tempered lover she would have given her preference. She should never have imagined it of herself that her thoughts would turn back and back, not to the pleasant flattery of which she could always have as much as she pleased, but to a few puzzling, hesitating, grudgingly-spoken words, brimful of feeling, which seemed always to call on her for a deeper response than she was ready to make. In real life she found it was not to be all taking; there was a troublesome call for giving which threatened to draw her out of her old self-centred existence into a region of thought and emotion she had not meant to come near for a long time yet. Dreaming was much easier. Why could she not choose the flattering homage that put her back into shadow-land, and did not offer or exact any troublesome amount of feeling on either side? Lesbia grew so absorbed in her self-debate, which did not really come in set phrases, but in vague suggestions, hard to catch and fix into any shape of words, that she did not perceive how long the time of Ellen's absence was. Neither did she notice that for some minutes past the red heifer's back had ceased to be the only conspicuous object behind the stone wall, being overtopped by a tall, awkward-looking figure, draped about the head with a black cloak, which, after regarding her deliberately for some time from behind that fortress, began gradually to draw into closer and closer neighbourhood to herself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Oh! to have lived like an Irish chief, when hearts were fresh and true,
And a manly thought, like a pealing bell, would quicken them through
and through;
And the seed of a generous hope right soon to a fiery action grew,
And men would have scorned to talk and talk, and never a deed to do."
C. G. DUFFY.

THE low singing which had attracted Ellen's attention had ceased by the time she had accomplished her descent into the hollow behind the hill, and come in view of the turf

shed, whose green roof was so exactly like the ground above as to make its neighbourhood unsuspected till seen from below. She had spoken the truth to Lesbia when she said she expected to find Murdock Malachy in the cave, for from the top of the hill she had observed that he did not follow the road to the hollow, and she had little doubt that this secret rendezvous in the hills was his real destination. But it was a more exciting hope than that of getting information of Connor's movements from him that induced her to get rid of her companions and venture on a visit to the mountain cave. She was on the look-out for signals, and in the muffled sounds that seemed to come from the depth of the earth, she had caught a note or two of a sang that used to be a watchword between herself and Connor when they played at brigands and rebels in their childish days. All was still, however, when she reached the door of the dilapidated cabin that covered the opening into the cave, and she paused a moment, half afraid to enter. There were marks of men's footsteps—shod feet—on the wet ground round the door, and a thin cloud of peat smoke was oozing through its crevices. There might be more than one or two people within—dare she knock?

Again the song broke out in a sweet rich voice and accent too refined for Murdock Malachy's.

Yes, it was Connor's signal. She knocked gently; there was a short delay as if some barricades were being removed; the door was opened a little way, and she heard Murdock's voice exclaiming joyfully, "It's Miss Eileen herself, sir," and then she stepped across the threshold, and Murdock shut the door quickly behind her. She found herself in a low shed, having at its end a dark chamber that ran for some distance under the hill. Light poured in dusky streaks from the crevices in the roof, and between the loose stones of which the walls were built, struggling with the smoke of the peat fire that burned dimly in the lower chamber and filled the place with a bewildering blue haze. In the centre was a table composed of two empty casks turned on end. A candle stuck in a hole of one cast a flickering light upon some papers with which the person who rose at the sound of Murdock's voice had been occupied. For a moment Ellen only saw a tall grey-coated figure and a head covered with a mass of sunny hair, that looked

exactly like what she had expected to see; and she came forward holding out both hands.

"Connor, you naughty boy, why do you run such risks?"

And then, as the haze cleared and the figure approaching her passed under a streak of sunshine, she paused. It was not Connor.

"A great deal more like my father than either of his sons," the sentence of Connor's letter that had moved her so much when first read, flashed back into her mind, but not to win entire acquiescence. She saw the strong likeness, but this face on which the dusty sunshine fell had a look of fire and endurance about it—a mingling of sadness and eagerness; a possibility of strong, stern passion expressed in its marked lines, that gave it an altogether different character from the playful, satirical, indolent face of Dermot Daly. The two who had come so suddenly into each other's presence stood still in silence for a few seconds, not embarrassed, but each curiously and intently scanning the other—he, with eyes penetrating and kindly, that seemed to be taking her measure; and she, glancing up, half attracted and half awed, as she realized that this was the leader to whom Connor at least, and how many others, had given themselves up, the possible hero and deliverer in whom Connor devoutly believed.

"It's Miss Eileen herself, sir," Murdock put in, thinking from the silence that some further ceremony of introduction was due.

"My cousin, Ellen Daly, of whom, as 'Miss Eileen herself,' I have heard every day since I came here," the stranger said, putting out his hand, and Ellen gave hers, not wondering any longer, now she had seen the smile that altered the whole face as her name was spoken, either at Connor's description or at his infatuation. She had heard and read of heroes and leaders to follow the light of whose smile thousands were ready to face danger amid death. Was this one of them? And what, in these terrible times, was he here to do?

"But where is Connor? I came here expecting to meet my brother," she said.

"Did you not meet him out on the hill? Murdock reported your neighbourhood just now, and nothing would

serve your brother but he must borrow a cloak of the old woman who is cooking our dinner in the cave there, and go up on to the hill for the chance of getting a word with you in private. There is a secret way through the cave where the old still used to be, to a trap-door that opens behind a stone wall on the hill. He instructed me to sing a certain song at the end of ten minutes to warn him not to stay too long."

"Ah, the cunning of him!" Ellen could not help exclaiming. "How cleverly he has contrived to have his own way in spite of my warnings and entreaties. It was not me at all, it was my friend Miss Maynard he wanted to see. He knew I should follow that song, and so he should secure a word with her alone. I am afraid you have a fellow-worker very difficult to keep in order, who is willing to imperil the gravest matters for any whim that crosses his mind."

"We know that sort well enough; but he is hearty, and troubled with neither doubts nor fears."

"Ah, that's because he does not think enough to have doubts."

"He does not think at all, that brother of yours; the better and happier he. The work we are engaged in needs either people who can think a long way on, far out of ordinary sight, or who do not think at all; and the non-thinkers are the best off, and can go most heartily into it. You see, I am speaking openly to you, taking you for one of the generous sisterhood who have thrown in their lot with ours, and who make our hopes possible by believing them."

"I am not sure that I deserve such confidence," Ellen said, hesitatingly, while tears welled up into her eyes. "I am not one of the women who inspire such enterprises as yours. I can be miserable for Ireland, but that is all. It is not thinking at all with me, it is just feeling, and one cannot feel a long way on, so as to forget the present, and not count the cost. I am not brave enough to be one of the inspirers."

"Yes you are. I read one of your letters to your brother, and nothing ever moved me so deeply. If to know that the women of one's country are miserable for her degradation is not enough to make the men fight—if the tears of such as you are not enough, then there is nothing left

to fight for. We shall never be a nation again; we are too dead for hope. But it is not so, we mean you to triumph for Ireland just as deeply as you have grieved."

He took her hand again as he spoke, and stooping down kissed the tips of her fingers. She was startled but not embarrassed; it was too clearly a homage to her feeling, and not to herself, rendered by one possessed by a single thought and quivering with every touch of emotion that answered to it, for there to be room for personal consciousness to come in.

She was anxious to end the interview, however, for Connor's rashness frightened her, and she dreaded Mr. Thornley's finding him with Lesbia,

"I wish Connor would come," she said; "I want to speak a word with him, though it will only be to warn him against imprudence. Did you not say there was a shorter way of getting out on the hill-side than by climbing round the edge of the hollow?"

"Yes, if you can scramble up an old chimney: but here is your brother coming feet foremost among the peat sods. That is one of our ways of exit and entrance here. You see, we don't scruple to let you into the secrets of the place."

Ellen had a severe remonstrance ready, but when Connor emerged from the blackness at the end of the cave—his merry face looking out of the folds of the old cloak still wrapped round his head—her anger vanished; she had nothing to say as she threw her arms round his neck but "Oh, Connor, Connor, how could you do it?"

"How could I do what? Play such a nice game at hide-and-seek with you, Eileen aroon, on my birthday?"

"Little enough I came into your thoughts. Have you frightened Lesbia out of her wits?"

"Not at all, it was thinking too much of me the darling girl was, to be surprised to see me; I have made her own it. Was she to keep my birthday, and I not to appear out of the earth by magic to thank her?"

"If she were the same little Babette she was last year, and not a great heiress, and if we did not owe so much to her brother, I would not mind your nonsensical wooing; but as it is—don't hate me, Connor dear—I shall be obliged to warn Mr. Thornley, if you hang about her and try to get round her in secret ways. I cannot let him go

away to England and leave Lesbia under our care, unless you will promise to keep out of the way."

"He is going away to England! Hurrah! Once let us get rid of his meddling hands and prying eyes, and we'll do some good here, D'Arcy and I."

"But I shall warn him of your doings with Lesbia, and he'll stay."

"You have not the heart. Think what I'll do for the cause if I get her and her thousands to help us."

"It would be base. Ask your friend what he would think of such conduct."

"Ask him I will, and welcome; he's too stanch to stick at anything that would help on the cause. Would you have him weigh the good of the country against a dirty bit of money of anyone's?"

"Well, I have warned you; and now I must go. Mr. Thornley will be back and miss me."

"How cleverly you got rid of him. I heard it all from behind the wall, and did not I tingle with impatience till Pelham was fairly off? It was awkward your bringing him here to-day. He possibly might have taken it into his head to refresh his memory with a look round, and if he had put his head in here, would not he have got even a bigger fright than he had when he first made acquaintance with the place?"

"Was Pelham ever here?"

"Have you forgotten Lictor? This is Dennis's old still; and here, just where you are standing, was where Lictor was shot."

"I hate to think of it, Connor; it seems as if that was the beginning of all our troubles."

"It can't be helped now. Come on. I'll take you round the edge of the hill. If Mr. Thornley is there, he won't know me from an old woman, with the cloak round my head, and I'll answer for little Lesbia having presence of mind to toss me a halfpenny."

As they left the shed, Ellen shook hands with D'Arcy.

"I am glad to have seen you, cousin," she said.

"And I you, if we never meet again. I have too few belonging to me not to value every chance of changing my dreams of them to remembrances, above anything else that concerns myself."

"There, what do you think of him?" cried Connor, triumphantly, when they had emerged into daylight again.

"I like him. I see what you mean about his having power 'to draw all creatures living under the sun, after him, so as you never saw,' like the Pied Piper."

"And he'll do it to some purpose one day, Eileen aroon: it was quite as much to show him to you as to speak with Lesbia, that I wiled you in there. Is not he glorious? I should like Cousin Anne to see him."

"Why can't you both go like Christians and stay with Cousin Anne, instead of lurking in caves and dens of the earth like——"

"Patriots as we are. No, no; we have too much conscience to involve Cousin Anne unbeknown to herself in our lawless doings; but, Ellen, he wants beyond anything to see the inside of Castle Daly. His mother used to talk to him about the place when he was a little lad in the wilds of America, and he thinks all the world of it. I have promised he shall at least see our old schoolroom, and the black-framed likeness of Aunt Ellen that hangs over the chimney-piece."

"Impossible, Connor; you could not take him secretly to the Thornleys' house."

"Could not I? What do you say to my having found the key to the little door in the north turret, convenient in the pocket of an old coat the very day I left Dublin? I have been in and out that way often enough to know it, I suppose."

"But the rooms are altered; the north wing is seldom used, and the door of communication at the head of the turret stairs is generally locked."

"It will be open, you'll see, on the night we pay you a visit, when you'll have the little trifle of money we spoke about ready for me. I can't possibly get back to Dublin without it, I assure you."

"Connor, I can't let you draw Lesbia into deceit."

"Give me credit for a grain of conscience, at least; we are not so badly off for followers that we need enlist her little frightened wits into our service. I flatter myself that there are servants in Castle Daly still that would do a good deal more for me than for their master. Ask Miss

Maynard where she thinks the little bunch of forget-me-nots she found on her dressing-table this morning came from."

"Connor, it's too bad. I believe it's all joke with you. I quarrelled with Mr. Thornley a few minutes ago for accusing us of playing at rebellion; but I do think it's nothing but play with you."

"Well—he—the fellow in there, has grim earnest for the two of us; and for the rest, don't be rash. Some day, perhaps, when the opportunity comes, you'll see whether it's most earnest or play with me. I don't think I'll be the worse for getting all the fun I can out of what comes in my way now. It's little enough pleasure there is in life this year for any one. There, put your foot on my knee for the last scramble up the cliffs and over the wall. And now I'd better vanish, but don't be too down-hearted. You have not seen quite the last of me." He disappeared for an instant, but before Ellen had gone many steps forward down the slope of the hill, his head wrapped in the old cloak again emerged from the shelter of the wall, and he called her back to whisper, "Remember, she believes firmly that I came all the way from Dublin for the sake of seeing her for ten minutes on my birthday; and if you undeceive her you'll make me no better than a spy and an informer, and drive me to hang myself. I've warned you fairly."

Ellen found Lesbia still occupying the precise spot where she had left her, and looking as demure as if she had been employed the whole time of her absence in gathering sprays of sundew, and spreading out the little rayed discs, on her hand as she was doing then.

"Did you—did you find the person you thought would give you news of Connor?" she asked, peeping shyly up into Ellen's face from under her eyelashes as Ellen seated herself by her side.

In spite of fear, vexation, and anxiety, Ellen could not help bursting out into a hearty laugh.

"Babette, at least you and I need not humbug each other. I want to tell you how sorry I am that Connor should have been so silly and taken such a liberty with you."

"I suppose it was silly, such a waste of time, when he ought to have been studying. Bride and John would be

very much annoyed if they knew ; they would never think I was safe again."

"Nobody ever is angry with Connor, but he really deserves their anger and yours."

"Of course I am very angry. Yet perhaps one can hardly call it a liberty. It was a long journey to take just for the chance of seeing one for a few minutes. I don't think I ever heard of such a thing being done for any one before—did you?"

"Only a wild boy like Connor would be so foolish ; it is not worth thinking about."

"Oh, I shall certainly not think of it again, nor mention it to John and Bride. It is better not to make them anxious—don't you think so?"

"Of course, I had rather not have my brother's folly exposed ; but you must do as you think right, Lesbia ; I dare not ask you not to tell."

"One does not like every little thing that happens to one to be thought of consequence, just because one happens to be an heiress," said Lesbia, pouting a little.

"It would be nothing to me, if it were not my brother Connor, for whom I always feel responsible," said Ellen.

"Ah, well, let us clamber down into the road, and set out to meet John, and think no more about it. You will not tell your brother Pelham ; he must not know, of course. But—but I wonder what he would think if he heard that anybody, say the silliest person in the world, had travelled right across Ireland just to speak to poor little me, on his birthday. *He* would wonder that anyone should think it worth while, would not he?"

"I am sure I don't know. We had better walk on and hasten Mr. Thornley's movements. Look at the length of our shadows, it must be very late ; Pelham will be tired of waiting for us at the landing-place."

When John appeared at last, he had to confess to having managed to sprain his ankle badly in leaping back to the shore of the lake from the island of waterlilies. He brought a large cluster of buds and flowers, but it only needed a glance in his face to see that the return walk along the rough road with the injured ankle had been a severe struggle. Lesbia's flushed cheeks escaped notice under cover of concern at her brother's accident ; and during the

next uncomfortable hour—while John Thornley limped along the road, frowning with pain and making strenuous efforts to keep up cheerful conversation with his companions, which neither of them could second—Ellen was brought to reproach herself for a feeling of relief that had come to her on her first sight of Mr. Thornley's condition. She began to be sorry for his sufferings, though she could not help still hugging the thought that now at least for some days to come Connor and his friend would be safe from observation of the keenest-witted person in the neighbourhood, and that her difficulty about accepting the charge of Lesbia might now be left to settle itself. It was a real relief at last when the boat was reached and Mr. Thornley subsided into a seat and allowed that he did not think he could have held on many minutes longer. He was quite beyond talking when the necessity for exertion was over, and lay back faint and pale, while Lesbia sat by him and sprinkled him with water, and Ellen and Pelham took the oars.

The sun had reached his point of disappearance behind Lac-y-Core by the time they entered the lake; the little island, with its ivy-draped ruin, that, seen in sunshine from the hill had glowed like an emerald in its setting of opal water, looked dark and imposing now in deep shadow. The eastern distance lay painted in every delicate tint, from intense purple to softest lilac and grey-blue; the bare tops of the Maam Turks, with the sun behind them, stood out against a cloudless sky in a wondrous haze of crimson fire, their rough outlines softened and clothed with a marvellous tender beauty that belonged to the atmosphere and the hour.

Mr. Thornley dragged himself up from the recumbent position which Lesbia had enjoined on him, to enjoy the scene.

"Glamour, is it not?" he said, smiling to Ellen. "One would think oneself sailing straight to the fortunate isles to live on lotus-fruit in peace for ever. Who would think it was all bog and rock, and swamp and water?"

"And famine and strife and woe!" Ellen continued to herself. "And oh! were the high hopes and the generous purposes glamour too?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"She loves you, then ?
One flash of hope burst : then succeed night,
And all's at darkest now. Impossible."

Colombe's Birthday.

MR. THORNLEY'S accident brought precisely the result Ellen had foreseen. The proposed journey to London had to be put off, and to give himself a chance of undertaking it before the spring was quite over, he had to submit to lie up and abstain from all use of the injured ankle for many days. Nothing was heard of Connor, and Ellen ceased to start at unexpected sounds, and began to look eagerly for letters in the hope of seeing Connor's handwriting on an envelope stamped "Dublin" again. The days of Mr. Thornley's captivity were decidedly pleasant days to everyone in the house. After experiencing one or two of them, Ellen understood the complacency with which Bride Thornley congratulated herself on being bound to a brother who knew how to stay in the house reasonably, and could be cut off from his ordinary occupations without making himself and everybody near him miserable. During the press of the sorrowful business of the past winter, some literary work, in which John Thornley had previously been much interested, had had to be laid aside, and now he and Bride turned back to it with a zeal that sometimes carried Ellen's sympathies with theirs, and sometimes left her (she not being of the essential student nature) lost in astonishment at their power of abstraction from present interests. She sat once or twice through an hour or two of a rainy afternoon, listening to their eager discussions in almost absolute silence, while wonder grew in her mind, till it was almost indignation, at the sight of two thoughtful people occupying themselves, while suffering such as she knew of was going on all around, with discussions as

to the relative merit of Charles Lamb's and Addison's styles of essay writing; the secret cause of Dean Swift's melancholy; or even the share which Rousseau's dreams of the perfectibility of human nature had had in bringing about the reckless disregard of individual human life which marked the first French Revolution. She thought the talk even more heartless when, instead of forgetting the present time, they spoke eagerly of it for the sake of searching out analogies to its woes in past periods of history; fitting cause and effect, and probable remote consequences, with a satisfaction in the completeness of the chain of reasoning that made them appear like dissectors calmly gathering knowledge from the throes of a living subject. Then the recollection of a face written over with deep lines of indignation and pity; of a few words, lately heard, breathing restless impatience of wrong, came back to her with a glow of sympathetic approval and content. Surely it was nobler to grow wild with pain at the sight of a great calamity, and spend oneself in frantic efforts to arrest its progress, than to be able to stand aside and chronicle the death throes and photograph the victim's glazing eyes, and speculate philosophically on what was to come when the agony had passed.

Once or twice John divined by the expression of her face, which was beginning to be an open book to him, the course her thoughts had taken, and when his and Bride's arguments came to an end, he tried a little wistfully to draw out an expression of opinion from her, and gain an opportunity of setting himself right in her eyes. Then the conversation was apt to take a plunge into depths of metaphysics, where the three sometimes found standing ground whence they could get glimpses of each other's points of view concerning the practical matters they seemed to have left far behind them. John would acknowledge the hardening effect on character of looking at life chiefly from the intellectual side, and confess that even in great questions, of politics or sociology, the want of due appreciation of the subtler emotions and spiritual sources of individual and national life was a fatal hindrance to penetrating to the truth of things, and caused the calculations of the science that takes note only of tangible results to prove itself folly when tested by ex-

perience. Bride, following her brother's lead, would bring examples from history of great results which had sprung from some unpremeditated word or deed of generous enthusiasm, or divine folly of self-sacrifice. Then Ellen listened complacently again, thinking of an enthusiasm which they had pronounced folly a few minutes before, but which might yet prove itself to be the very conduct they were now admiring. One or two rainy afternoons spent in such talk had the effect of years of ordinary intercourse in making the sharers in it known to each other. Ellen fell into a habit of referring in thought to the brother's and sister's standard on all occasions when a judgment had to be formed, and began to feel as if she had spent half a lifetime in their company instead of a few days.

The last piece of literary work Mr. Thornley undertook during his imprisonment was an essay on the poetry of Young Ireland. It grew from his having to listen to numerous quotations from the poems of Connor's friends, which had served Ellen for arguments in their political discussions. At his request she brought out her store of ballads cut from the *Nation* newspaper. And to secure that justice should be done to the merits of the verses, she undertook to read them aloud herself.

"Who is it that signs himself 'D'Arcy'?" asked Bride, looking over Ellen's shoulder, as she finished a poem which had called out all her powers of effective reading; "there is surely something of the true ring about his verses; and how well Ellen always reads them."

"Give the paper to me. I shall better know what the poem is worth when I read it to myself," John said, stretching out his hand for the newspaper Ellen held.

She looked up suddenly, and saw an expression of keen anxiety in the eyes that, unknown to her, had been studying her face as she read, and she could not help starting and colouring violently. She had quite forgotten where she was; the lighted drawing-room had faded away from before her eyes as she spoke the words, and she had been seeing the turf shieling under the hill, and the dusty sunrays streaming through a chink in its roof on to a face that, now she had once seen it, seemed to furnish a comment on the words she was repeating. It was start-

ling to be called back to her present surrounding by the consciousness that her thoughts were being guessed at by some one near; and she was angry with herself for the agitation that would increase the more she thought about it, as if she had been guilty of betraying a secret. Mr. Thornley withdrew his eyes from her face; but as he folded and rustled the paper, she heard a quick impatient sigh. Bride had meanwhile taken up a sheet that Ellen had laid aside a few minutes before, and was busy with it.

"Surely there is unusual power of picturesque description here too. John, just listen to the first verse again—

" 'Long, long ago, beyond the misty space
Of twice a thousand years,
In Erin old there dwelt a mighty race
Taller than Roman spears.
Like oaks and towers, they had a giant grace,
Were fleet as deers,
With woods and waves they made their hiding-place,
These western shepherd seers.'

Such pictures in a few words one does not often get from an unknown young poet."

"How do you know he is young?—that strikes me as practised writing."

"He is young," said Ellen. "The author of those verses is also a friend of Connor's. He began to write very early, I have heard. He was thrown on his own resources when he was almost a child, and was editing a paper in America at eighteen. He is sub-editor of the *Nation* now."

"And a hero in your eyes, I perceive," said John.

"Other people have had to provide for themselves at eighteen, and for their brothers and sisters too, without anyone taking them for heroes," said Bride, looking at her brother.

"That has nothing whatever to do with what we are talking about," answered John, sharply, and evidently annoyed. "Let me have all the newspapers. I will look over Young Ireland's effusions at my leisure, and see what I can make of them. Two of the poets are at least worth demolishing."

Ellen, who had now recovered her self-possession, proceeded to collect the newspapers, and arrange them

according to date. "I hope I have not done the Young Ireland poets any harm by reading their verses aloud," she said. "I want you to write a good review. I know they feel it hard that no one in England takes any notice of what they write, let it be ever so powerful. It is like sounding a trumpet to deaf people. Perhaps you might act as a sort of conductor, and carry the sounds into an atmosphere that will reach more ears."

"I will write my best after that," said John, with a glow on his pale face; "and as for your reading, I was thinking, just as you spoke, that if I were dead, and you were to come and read verses of mine over my grave as you have read those, the sound would stir the frozen blood about my heart, and call me back to life again. It would be enough, I should say, to satisfy any poet's ambition to hear you read his verses once."

"I think we had better open the window to let out the poetical afflatus," remarked Bride, dryly. "The room is so full of exaggeration it is getting into our heads."

"Not into mine," said Ellen, laughing. "I know well enough that nothing will ever satisfy Connor's ambition but a paragraph of unmitigated praise in a *Quarterly Review*, and it is Mr. Thornley, not I, who can give him that."

For the next day or two, Mr. Thornley shut himself into his study to write, and as Bride was occupied with preparations for the journey to London, which was fixed for the end of the week, Ellen spent her time with Lesbia among her old haunts on the hills and lake. Sometimes Pelham accompanied them in their walks; and sometimes Mrs. Daly was persuaded to take a seat in a boat, or to share a drive, and in her company Lesbia was always her best and sweetest self, not the shy, shrinking Babette of Whitecliffe days, nor yet the self-conscious heiress, who aired little whims and graces to the annoyance of John and Bride, but a pleasant mixture of coaxing sweetness and pretty deference that exactly hit Mrs. Daly's requirements in a companion, and brought out Pelham's conversational powers to such an extent that Ellen found herself at liberty to follow out her own thoughts undisturbed. She was not sorry to be left to herself. Just for those days, underneath all the anxiety that possessed her, there

was a glow of renewed hope and confidence that coloured her musings with a brighter tint than they had known for many a day. It startled her, as falling in curiously with the current of her thoughts, when one afternoon, Pelham, detaining her for a few minutes' conversation in the garden, after Lesbia had gone into the house, began his communications by asking, in a grave tone—

"Ellen, what motive do you suppose induces John Thornley to take so much trouble on our account, and make such sacrifices as he does to help us?"

She had been depending on his help; but it had not occurred to her to question the motive for its being so freely given, till Pelham put it to her.

"Do you mean anything fresh?" she asked, remembering, after a minute's thought, that the service she was most counting on just now could not have entered into Pelham's calculations.

"Every day brings something fresh; and as I have no one to consult but you, I want you to help me to consider whether we are not letting ourselves be bound by greater obligations than it is right for us to accept from anyone."

"Dear Pelham, how kind of you to consult me!" said Ellen, stroking the arm she held fondly, and looking up into his face with as much gratitude as if he had offered her a crown.

Pelham was touched. "I am sure I don't want to keep you out of my confidence," he said, a little huskily. "I am lonely enough, and we three ought to hold together, for we have not much else but each other to hold on to. If I have not consulted you and Connor hitherto, it is because you always seem to be looking so far ahead that you have no attention for what is passing."

"You shall always find us ready to attend to whatever occupies you for the future. We will make a triple alliance, dear Pelham—so close, that neither Pelham Court Pelhams nor Thornleys shall ever come between us again."

"There is no need to guard against Pelham Court interference now, Ellen. My chief annoyance is the cool way in which Uncle Charles hands over our affairs to John Thornley, leaving him to meet all difficulties as they arise in the best way he can. As long as our misfortune seemed manageable, Uncle Charles was ready enough to help,

but now that it has passed beyond his experience, he refuses to believe in it—he turns his back upon us, and leaves things to take their course.”

“If Mr. Thornley had done the same?”

“We should have been ruined as utterly as any of the poor wretches who are turned out of their little holdings to earn enough Indian meal on the public works to keep themselves from starving. Ellen, you and I are almost, if not quite, as truly *beggars*, living this year on charity, as that gang of men with pickaxes over their shoulders who are crawling miserably past our gate just now. I am sorry to startle you, dear, by saying such a thing, but it is true.”

“But why is it so? How have things grown so bad with us?”

“The famine. There has not been a shilling of rent paid this year on the estate, and will not be; yet the interest on the mortgages has to be made up. The holders are ready to come down on us at the first failure, and are only held off by the remittances John Thornley pays out of his own pocket.”

“But is he so rich? I thought it was Lesbia who had all the money.”

“He had a legacy—and he calls paying our debts speculating with his fortune, and says he has a right to do what he pleases with his own.”

“Then we are actually depending on him?”

“The rent paid for the Castle has been our chief resource through the winter; but what a transparent pretence it is—their choosing to rent it from us this year. The old residents are flying the country as if it were plague-stricken, as indeed it is—and they stay on. It must be for our sakes; but why? I want you to help me to solve the puzzle, and consider whether we can continue to accept his charity!”

“You expected Uncle Charles to do more for us?”

“I think he might take a little more trouble. I think he might be kinder to my mother and you, and offer you a home, instead of leaving you to be obliged to comparative strangers for a shelter.”

“Pelham, dear, you make me feel very guilty when you say that. There is something to be said in excuse for Uncle Charles, and I have only been waiting for a good

opportunity to tell you. I had another letter from Marmaduke just before we came here."

"And you have answered it?"

"Yes; mamma was very kind, and told me to write just what I pleased; and if you will be as good to me, Pelham, and try not to blame me more than you can help, for keeping mamma out of her old home—I will be so grateful to you."

"I can be sorry for your decision without blaming you. You have a right to choose for yourself; but I have always thought Marmaduke a very good fellow, and that you were lucky to please him."

"Yes, I know everyone thought so—certainly everyone at Pelham Court—and that would not have made it easier for me to go there as Marmaduke's wife. I should not have gone only to him, but to them all. It would have been just the same with me as when I stayed there three years ago; and Pelham, I don't think I could condemn myself to carry such a sore, angry heart to the end of my life, as I had then. They did not mean to hurt me, but their way of thinking of me as altogether different from themselves crept out at every other word. They were always telling me how Irish I was. It was Irish exaggeration, Irish blundering, Irish romance, whenever I spoke a word that came fresh from my head or warm out of my heart. Yet, for mamma's sake, and to satisfy you, I think I could have borne it all, if it could have been in any other way than just the way Marmaduke wanted. That would not have been honest. He likes me as I am, poor fellow, and would have expected me to go on being myself in spite of them all, and I am not strong enough. He would have been disappointed, just as Connor and I used to be disappointed in our butterfly chases, when we closed our hands on a purple-emperor, and found, on opening them, that there was nothing inside but broken wings and dust. Don't you think that there is truth in what I say, Pelham, dear? You'd like me to be true, above all, would you not?"

"Yes," said Pelham, deliberately, after a moment's silence; "you were quite right, Ellen; and whatever trouble is before us, I promise never to reproach you with what you have thrown away. I know more about it than

you suppose. You are not the only one of us who has felt out of place at Pelham Court. I have not forgotten what I suffered when I first went to live there as a little fellow, and they used to show me like a curiosity to their friends, as their cousin from Connaught, and wonder, before my face, that I had not higher spirits, and did not make Irish bulls. I used to vow to myself never to speak an unnecessary word. If I am a dull, reserved fellow now, you must put it down to the training in silence I had then. After all, I am afraid sometimes that I am as Irish at heart as any of you—if feeling a great deal more than is convenient makes me so.”

“Oh, Pelham, thank you for saying that! Now we are real brother and sister.”

“But, whatever I am at the core, I keep the horror that grew up with me of acting so as to draw on myself the charges usually brought against Irishmen. Conduct that, under certain circumstances, I might have been capable of, becomes impossible to me when I remember the contempt I have heard poured on it at Pelham Court as the usual resource of a broken-down Irish gentleman.”

“But what conduct?”

“Ruined Irishmen are always said at Pelham Court to mend their fortunes by marrying heiresses.”

“Mamma was not an heiress—they cannot say that of——”

“No, no!—and yet you must have noticed the pitying tone in which they always speak of our mother there, as if she had, if not degraded, at least done very badly for herself in marrying an Irishman.”

“Why do you recall that now?”

“To lead you back to the question we began with.”

“You are thinking of Connor and Lesbia.”

“Of Connor? Oh no, he never was in earnest.”

“Jest and earnest are so mixed up together in Connor, one cannot say. It would not have been another person’s earnest, but I believe it was his.”

“The worse for us all. There is no use in shutting our eyes to facts. Day by day we are sinking lower and lower, and every step down brings with it another link in the chain of obligation to the people who any day may possess themselves of all we are losing. Do you think John

Thornley's kindness is meant in any way to lay an obligation on me not to try—not to win—in short, has he, do you think, the Pelham Court notion of an Irishman's method of repairing his broken fortunes?—and does he intend by every service he forces on us to show me that it would be treachery in me to—the thought is intolerable! His meaning or not meaning it changes nothing in the facts—but I could not bear to be taking bribes; to feel that it was obligation, not my own sense of honour alone, that guarded every word and look."

"My poor Pelham! how I wish it was not such deep earnest with you."

"I can't understand such a thing being at all, if it is not earnest. Of course I know perfectly well that there is to be no end to it. Let the worst fortune come that can come, I will never be the seedy Irishman that worms himself into idle comfort again through a woman's good will, nor shall Connor so degrade himself, if I can prevent it."

"And suppose poor little Lesbia should love the one or the other of you?"

"You have no reason to think she does."

"I do not say I have; and at all events, Pelham, no one can accuse you of giving her the opportunity. The 'Cadet de Colobrière' himself, who, by the way, now I come to think of it, is Lesbia's favourite romance-hero just at present, was not more *farouche* than you are."

"I don't want to make a bear of myself. I am not such an idiot as to think there is any need. I only grow savage when this question of the motive of John Thornley's kindness puzzles me; and his favours begin to look like bribes."

"His kindness has never astonished or puzzled me. I know quite well that he feels as if he could never do enough for us and that all he has belongs more to us than to himself. Though he is so much more your friend than mine, I understand him better than you do, and give him credit for higher motives. It has not anything to do with you and Lesbia. All his conduct to us is influenced by—just that night—you know what I mean. Our father died in his place; and when he took him out of my arms, I believe he felt as if he took upon himself all the care for us that our father would have had. I don't think you need

scruple to accept any service from him : it comes to him as duty with the life that, but for our father's generosity, would have ended that night."

"But he has never said a word of the kind. I should not think he is at all the sort of man to have such a romantic idea of duty. You know they would call it so at Pelham Court. They would put that down as one of your sentimental Irish ideas, and scout the possibility of its influencing Uncle Charles's model man of business, John Thornley."

"Then they don't know him as well as I do. Sentimental or not, the thought did not come out of my mind at all. I have read it in his face a dozen times. Some faces have such a great deal in them ; and do you know, Pelham, I begin to think it is the plain faces that bear best to be looked at, and are the beautiful ones after all. Yes, I know it is an Irish bull ; but I mean exactly what I say. I have found it out lately. I used to call Miss Thornley and her brother plain, but since I have been here, I have seen looks on their faces that are beyond anything for what they tell you."

"Whatever Thornley's motives may be, my position of dependence on him remains the same ; and you can't wonder at my finding it galling, and longing to escape somehow. If only I were not such a fool !—if I could do anything !"

"It seems to me that you are doing a great deal. Let us, just for argument's sake, suppose that all the Daly estates had passed into the Thornleys' hands, that they were owners and you the agent, you would still be working and earning fairly what you receive."

"About a tenth part—for my work is not worth much. I am only learning. The rest of our income would be charity, and is."

"You are so resolutely sensible, dear Pelham, you won't let the least little touch of illusion come in to hide the ugly bare outlines of fact. That is Pelham Court training, and it does make things hard for you."

"At the best it is difficult enough to accept obligations gracefully, and not let them make one feel mean."

"There are plenty of people have to do it this year. What we feel about the 'Thornleys' bounty is only a

twinge of the great pain all Ireland is feeling at having to take relief from England. There are some who can't bear it at all, who are just driven wild with the shame of having to be fed by the hands that have oppressed and robbed us hitherto. They think it would be better to break loose before the new chains are bound round us, and die free. You can understand their feeling for the nation what you feel for yourself, can you not, Pelham dear?"

"I can understand it and blame it too. I don't mean to encourage myself in bitterness, however great the temptation may be. When things are at the blackest, and one's way hardest to see, what is the use of raising more mists? Whether it is hope or anger that creates them, they can only bewilder. Let us do our best in our extremity to see clearly and walk straight."

"I shall have a chance of growing wise, now you take me in hand. We must indeed help each other, Pelham, for we have a great deal to bear. How pretty the village looks from here—the freshly white-washed cabins, the broad road overhanging the water, and the green shore of the lake! Who would think there was sorrow and death in it? Pelham, since we must leave all this, and leave it spoilt and sad, I am glad that you have not often been here; that your life has not struck such deep roots about the place as mine and Connor's."

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I shall feel the break-up more than either of you. I shall always be sorry that I did not care for the poor old place while it was ours."

Just then the bell for the Angelus from the little white-washed chapel in the village sounded. Ellen clasped her hands round her brother's arm, and held him motionless and silent where they were standing for a moment or two.

"Just think," she said, when they turned again towards the house, "what a great cry of anguish went up to-night from all Ireland with the Angelus bell: 'Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of death!' and the hour of death so near to thousands everywhere throughout the land now. As I stood still that moment I could almost believe that I felt and heard the great throb and cry for help go pulsing up to the throne of God. We must comfort ourselves by remembering that He heard it surely."

An expression of reverent gravity remained on Ellen's

face till she had parted from Pelham in the hall and mounted the first flight of the staircase on her way to her mother's room; and then, at a sudden thought, she turned and ran back to him in one of those rapid changes of mood that were so incomprehensible to him. Resting both hands on his shoulders, she looked smilingly in his face—

"Now, my dear Cadet de Colobrière—no, Ainé de Daly, I mean"—she said, "I am not coming down to dinner to-day; mamma is tired, and I am going to make tea for her in her room, and I lay a solemn charge on you not to be *farouche*. I assure you, on my honour, that the commonplace talking individual is the least dangerous of the two, and that your conscience imposes it upon you to be extremely agreeable, and to make the evening in my absence a pleasure instead of a weariness to our hosts. Now, attend, I shall take means to learn how you conduct yourself."

On her way down to dinner, Bride Thornley turned into the pretty boudoir opening from Mrs. Daly's bedroom to see that everything was comfortably arranged for the evening meal Ellen and her mother were to share there. Prosperity agreed with Bride Thornley's looks—that is to say, the neat figure and small-featured, colourless, intellectual face that had looked insignificant when she was clad in the scanty drab garments she had affected when left to her own devices, had an air of refinement, and even of distinction, when set off by the rich dark silks and judiciously chosen ribbons and laces that Lesbia's taste imposed. Neither were the other outside appliances of wealth so incapable of giving Miss Thornley pleasure as she was apt to imagine, when she looked back lovingly on her days of struggle. As she satisfied herself of her guests' comfort, she glanced round with evident satisfaction on the pleasant room; the sofa drawn in front of a cosy wood fire; the dainty tea-service, whose bright silver and delicately-coloured china reflected the glow of the flames; the softly falling curtains and rich carpets that made a pretty background to the two figures seated by the fire. She certainly enjoyed making her guests welcome to so much comfort, and was pleased to find herself the moving-spring of a well-regulated household.

Ellen noticed the expression of complacency that crossed

her face, as she lingered a minute or two by the door, making hospitable suggestions to Mrs. Daly; and when they were alone, she turned to her mother with an impatient sigh that had much wonder and a spice of contempt in it.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "this is all new to Miss Thornley; she can admire the house as it is now, and fancy that the finery does not spoil it."

"She is a very clever woman," Mrs. Daly answered, echoing Ellen's sigh; "if I had been as clever——."

"Oh, mamma! don't—don't wish you had turned the dear old Castle into a cockney paradise while he was in it. How he would have hated the stiff prim life, and all the little fads and formalities they make such a parade over."

"You are prejudiced, Ellen. The quiet and order are delightful to me; and I cannot help feeling more comfortable here now, changed as everything is, and sad as I must be, than I used to feel in the old days of waste and confusion. This is what I was accustomed to in my youth; and when one is growing old, it is to the habits of one's childhood one turns back with pleasure. I lie here with my eyes shut, listening to the stillness, or to the regular subdued household sounds, till I forget the actual circumstances under which I am here, and fancy myself either a child at home again, in my dear mother's time, or that this is Pelham's house as I used in thought to regulate and arrange it for him when he was a baby, and I had him first in this very room. I don't believe that I have once since I came quite taken in the thought that I am here as the guest of John and Bride Thornley, the children of that cousin who used to be spoken of at Pelham Court as the least reputable connection of our family."

"Mamma, did you know these very Thornleys in old times? I wish you would tell me all you remember ever to have heard about them."

"Their father had an old-fashioned manorhouse about twenty miles from Pelham Court. He was a very dissipated man, well-known as a horse-racer and gambler. My father and mother disliked him greatly, and we did not visit at his house; but we were all very sorry for his wife, a gentle, lady-like person, who lived a very solitary

life shut up with her children, and seldom going anywhere. Once a year or so she would come, bringing one of her little ones with her, to spend a day at Pelham Court. It was evidently an effort for her to come into society, so neglected and unhappy had she become; but she made it for the sake of keeping up her connection with us, and the position in the county which was hers by right of birth. I quite well remember her dejected, worn face, like Bride's, but handsomer, and not so acute. The last time I saw her was when I stayed at Pelham Court, two years after my marriage; she came alone that day; but I remember her telling me, with tears in her eyes, an anecdote of her son John's devotion to her. It made an impression on me, for Pelham was sitting on my knee at the time, a little child of a year old, and I thought it was such love as that I should like to grow up between him and me."

"Can you remember it?" asked Ellen, with eager curiosity.

"The circumstances are confused in my memory now; but I think the story was that the father had taken the child, without the mother's knowledge, to some place she disliked his visiting, and intended keeping him there through the night, leaving her in ignorance where he was; and that the boy escaped from the window of the room where he had been put to bed, and ran back through a dark winter's night a long distance home, to save her, as she said, some hours of agony. Poor woman! she died worn out with it at last."

"Then they must have suffered a great deal, that elder brother and sister. That is how they came to have such quiet, watchful, resolute faces. I am glad you have told me this story, mamma, it makes me understand them better. What was their old home like?"

"An old-fashioned ivy-grown place, with a moat round it. I rode past it with your father the day before I was married, and I remember being surprised that it did not strike him as so forlorn-looking and out of repair as I thought it. I had not seen Castle Daly then. Your Uncle Charles bought the place some years after, when Mr. Thornley had to sell everything. He has improved the house, I believe, and means it for Marmaduke when he

marries. It is strange, indeed, the odd turns of fortune and unexpected complications that time brings with it."

"Very strange," said Ellen, a little falteringly, for she knew that her mother's thoughts were contemplating the possibility of time bringing the strange turn of fortune's wheel that would place her in the Thornleys' old home as its mistress, while they were ruling in hers. She hastened to start another subject.

"Uncle Charles bought their old manorhouse, then. Did he lose sight of his cousins when they were turned out of it? Did not he do anything for them in their worst time?"

"It would have been useless to try to help them while their father lived. To have given or lent money to the elder Thornley would have been like pouring water into a sieve; and nothing would induce either Mrs. Thornley or the children to separate their fortunes from his during his life. They had offers of help from her relations and his on condition of giving him up, but they were determined to hold together. By the time the father died there was not much to be done for them. Bride and John had worked their way up, and were doing well for themselves. It was more on our behalf than on his that Uncle Charles persuaded John Thornley to come here as your father's agent."

"They look like people who would always hold together, and stand by every person or thing that had a claim on them, or that they had ever taken up—steadfast—I think even Lesbia would be that, if she were once fixed."

"You think so?" Mrs. Daly asked, meditatively; and then, after the unusual burst of conversation a long silence followed. They had reached the borders of a topic that neither cared to enter upon, and that tempted each to drift off into reverie.

When tea was over, Mrs. Daly lay back on the sofa with her eyes shut, listening, as she said, to the stillness; and occasionally, when a door was opened below, catching the distant sound of Pelham's and Lesbia's voices in a duet to which Bride was playing the accompaniment on the piano in the drawing-room. Ellen sat on a stool looking into the glowing wood embers, and seeing there a vision of an old manorhouse, whose low-ceilinged,

panelled rooms, as they opened out before her, were occupied by an incongruous succession of owners—Marmaduke and herself, Pelham and Lesbia, John and Bride. It rose up before her fancy as a rival home to Castle Daly, invested with a fatal power of attraction that was destined to draw all the prosperity and habitableness from one family abode to the other,—an Aaron's serpent of a home, swallowing up other homes in revenge for having been left desolate so long. "They must love best the place where they were born," she said to herself; "and Uncle Charles would welcome them back there now they are prosperous. Why don't they go?" And with the question a heavier sense of obligation than she had acknowledged before fell upon her and saddened her.

The evening was nearly over when, on Mrs. Daly's retiring to rest, she ran down stairs to spend the last half-hour before prayer-time in the drawing-room. Everyone came forward to reproach her for having been absent so long on John's and Bride's last evening; but Ellen thought they all looked as if they had enjoyed themselves in her absence. Pelham apparently had not been *farouche*; for he and Lesbia were standing together by the piano chatting in the pauses of their songs, and there was a little flush on Lesbia's face, and the soft light in her brown eyes that became them best. Bride, with her fingers on the keys, playing mechanically what she was told to play and dreaming between whiles, was thinking that she should have John all to herself to-morrow. John, under cover of the music, had been indulging himself in a thoughtful revisal of the essay on Young Ireland poetry, that was to go with him to London the next day, reclining comfortably in his arm-chair meanwhile, and only jotting down a memorandum for a note or altering the form of a sentence with his pencil, and now and then murmuring over a phrase half aloud to see if the sound satisfied his ear as well as the sense his judgment. He was well pleased as he read, and secretly thought that here was a piece of work well done—there was thought, and surely here and there pathos too, and sentences of keen sarcasm that in their wording more nearly realized his standard of expression than anything he had written before. He looked up at the bookshelf over his head, and nodded smilingly

towards the copy of Elia's essays which had been his first purchase when he and Bride found themselves in a condition to begin to build up a library; and he said to himself that his past hours of devotional admiration of that master of delicate irony had not been quite thrown away, but might yet produce fruit that would prove the disciple not so far behind his model but that their kinship might be recognized. When Ellen came near, John resigned his chair and pencil into her hands, and begged her to read the essay and mark any passage she did not approve. Then he walked away to the other end of the room, and called Pelham to come and look over some papers with him, and discuss matters of business that had to be attended to while he was away. Pelham grew perplexed, and after a time, somewhat annoyed, when he discovered that though Mr. Thornley folded and unfolded letters and talked fast, he was not by any means giving his whole attention to the questions they were considering, and that he invariably paused in the middle of a sentence if Ellen turned over a leaf of the MS. she held while he was speaking. When Pelham answered, his eyes became fixed on the pencil between Ellen's fingers, and he was clearly far more occupied in counting the number of marks she made on the edge of the page she was reading than in listening to what was said. There was nearly as much of the author's anxiety for appreciation as of the lover's in the absorption with which John watched Ellen's progress through his pages. He was not foolish enough to suppose that he could win her heart by any display of literary skill, but he thought there were outworks of admiration to be stormed that way; and he counted on having earned her gratitude by the ample justice he had rendered to the grace and originality he had found in some of Connor's verses. To atone for the critical mildness there displayed, he had fallen with double severity on the faults and exaggerations of the poems that had moved him to enthusiasm when he had heard Ellen's voice thrill and tremble with their pathos. In treating these, he felt he was dealing with perilous matter that his conscience would not allow him to trifle with; and, almost unknown to himself, the words of that other poet aroused a strong antagonism—an impatient disapproval

that coloured his judgment of his verse more than he was aware.

At last Ellen turned the final page, and John pushed aside the papers he had been arranging into a confused heap again, and hurried up to her chair. He almost trembled at the thought of the first look she would turn on him when she raised her eyes from the paper. The concluding sentences of his essay were to his mind full of deep sympathy with Ireland's sufferings, and of mournful, solemn warning to those who, while singing their country's wrongs, were preparing a still worse fate for her than she had yet endured; and he thought Ellen would be much moved in reading what he had written. He recollected the wet sheet of the newspaper when one pathetic poem had received such a tribute as would, he thought, have satisfied the most exacting poet's thirst for acknowledgment. Would there be tears in those dearest eyes in the world now?

"Well," he said, standing opposite her, "how do you like it?"

The eyes she raised to his face were swimming in tears, but it was an angry light that flashed through them.

"Like it! How could you think I should like it! Why, I hate it all—I hate every word."

The excess of his surprise and disappointment calmed him at once and made him frigid.

"I am sorry, but I was of course obliged to write what I believe to be true. Why do you hate it?"

"It is cruel—you ought to know that. The praise is what I hate; it is all double-edged, a great deal crueller than the blame. You talk about imagination, and magic, and glamour, and the force of eloquent words, as if the poems were all made up out of these, and there were no patriotism, no wrongs, no real country even—nothing real at the bottom for the enthusiasm to be about. If you had said this out plainly in words that did not profess to praise, I should have been angry, but I should not have hated it quite so much."

"You are like all women, who never quite understand or appreciate irony."

"I do understand it; I hate it worst of anything in the world. It is like a blight that creeps in and kills every-

thing it touches. Yes, and it withers the strength of its wielders as well as that of those it wounds."

"It kills unrealities and false enthusiasms, nothing stronger."

"True enthusiasms sometimes have weak beginnings, and when irony kills *them*——"

"Well?"

"It is the worst sort of murder; there is no end to the evil of it, for you can never say what base or terrible things may not spring up from their ashes. When all the high feeling and hope has been laughed out of them, they die; but out of their ashes monsters of cruelty and hate rise up."

"How do you know?" asked Bride, who had come up behind John, and for the last minute or two had been looking at the agitated faces of the disputants with a sensible smile on her lips. "Don't you think, Miss Daly, that you are giving John fresh evidence of the truth of his remarks concerning the creative power of Irish eloquence, when you frighten us out of all wish to go to bed to-night by such Cassandra prophecies? John is slowly turning to stone under the effect of your denunciations, and is already, as you may perceive, quite incapable of holding his bedroom candle straight."

"Of course you laugh at me," said Ellen, rising and laying down the manuscript sheets on a table near. "I will go to bed. It is waste of words for me to speak when you can sneer at D'Arcy O'Donnell's poems."

"I don't sneer," said John, coming close to her, and speaking emphatically. "Sneers imply contempt, and there is not a grain of contempt in the whole paper; it is you who *will* read it wrong. It is respectful throughout, for I have put out all my powers, and I praise all I can conscientiously."

"You put yourself on a height and judge."

"Critics always must."

"Then they are always wrong."

"Perhaps; but you will at least allow that I have done justice to Connor."

"You have praised his rhymes; but, fond of such praise as Connor is, he will hate it, when it is given at the expense of all he believes in and cares for, as heartily as

I hate it for him. I would not advise you to trust that manuscript in his hands if he were here to night."

"If you would show me where you think I am unjust, instead of condemning the whole," said John, deprecatingly, "I am not beyond conviction; and though you may not believe it, I have a sincere wish to speak the truth. If you would specify——"

"I can't," answered Ellen. "You would call it all exaggeration; it would be, just as your sister says, giving you fresh evidence to turn against us. Give me my candle and let me go. I don't think I will ever tell you what I really think again about anything I care for. I'll know now how you will take it."

John turned away abruptly, took a bedroom candle from a table, and lit it slowly; then, as he placed it in Ellen's hand, he said, in a low voice that could only reach her ear—

"What you said last was too bad. You talk of other people being cruel; but that was a great deal worse than cruelty—it was revenge. You must have known how it would hurt me."

"Good-night!" said Ellen, aloud. "I am sorry if I am cross, but I can't help it; good-night, Miss Thornley—I know you are wishing me away, for you said you still had a great deal to do to-night, and Lesbia has disappeared long since."

Bride turned to her brother, as the door closed behind Ellen—

"'Like oaks and towers they had a giant grace,
Those western shepherd seers,'"

she quoted, laughing. "Such an exhibition does make one feel one's own moderate size, mental and bodily, does it not? I *quite* believe now in the O'Flaherty ancestress, who frightened the Saxons into paying tribute; but, my dear John, I beg your pardon for laughing, I see you are really—annoyed——"

"Annoyed is not the word—it goes a great deal deeper than that."

"I am sorry, but really—her opinion is worthless—utterly worthless on such a matter as this. You could not expect a half-educated girl (don't wince at the phrase, John, you know she is half-educated in our sense of the

word) to appreciate such writing as yours. It is quite beyond her. Now, that is really the best piece of criticism you have ever written."

"Criticism is a horrid trade. She was right in saying that it withers up the craftsmen as well as their victims. We have stultified ourselves over it—you and I, Bride. In our horror of sentiment we have toppled over on the other side, and grown as false as that which we wished to avoid."

"It is only our crust, and people whose liking is worth having will make their way through it, and find us out."

"It is a desperate hope, though, when the liking is a matter of life and death; and there are people with no crust. Does anyone about here know, I wonder, what sort of person this Young Ireland poet—this O'Donnell—is? Not that it is any concern of mine. The important question to me is, are my criticisms unjust?"

"I won't have you consider. You have always given me a right over your compositions since the first you brought to me, and I have given my *imprimatur* to this. Let me take it away and pack it up before you spoil it."

"No, no, leave it where it is."

"But you won't meddle with it to-night in the mood you are in?"

"No, I will take a night to think it over; but leave it on my writing-table. I will not touch it till to-morrow morning, and then not, unless I find there is good reason."

"Of course you'll spoil it; but I see you must be left to take your way;"—then, as he turned to get her candle, she came up behind him, and put both her hands on his shoulders. "John, there's just a word more to be said: however impervious our crust may be to other people, between us two it can never be a disguise. No possible armour of cynicism you could put on would ever hide the real *you* from *me*. I know well enough that my liking is not a matter of life and death; but whatever you want from it, it is always there, and will not, I think, fail you."

"Thank you: I have been wishing to thank you for a long time, only I did not know how to get out the words, for being so kind to *her*, and for making this week what I believe I shall be glad of all my life, even if, as is most likely, I never have another like it."

"You will have enough of such to tire out my good behaviour, and force me against my will to own that 'oaks and towers,' and 'giant graces,' and enthusiasms, are not as much to my taste as more commonplace materials, which, to my mind, wash and wear better. Do you remember my telling you that it was as well for me to keep a certain possibility concerning you in my mind, that I might be able to bear it when it came, and your saying you could not see what there would be to bear?"

"And I don't now. I should have thought that such companionship as we have had lately would have been the greatest delight to you—would have made you perfectly happy."

"Yes, and you would think the same if I talked to you till morning. You are only a man after all, and must not affect to see through my crust as clearly as I see through yours. Good-night; I shall go and finish my packing."

It was very late before Bride Thornley came near the end of her business. The perfect ordering of the household, which gave such content to Mrs. Daly, was not effected without much labour on the part of its head; and at this juncture there was also to be taken into account arrangements for the distribution of food among the villagers, which could not be given over into less systematic hands than her own without much forethought. A little before twelve o'clock, Bride issued from her room with a bundle of memorandums and papers which she designed to arrange in the pigeon-hole compartments of a desk in the housekeeper's room, where Lesbia would find them when needed. She was not altogether sorry to have an excuse for coming out, like a sultan in disguise, at unseasonable hours, that she might satisfy herself of the obedience of her subjects on certain points concerning which she had long been doubtful; and when on reaching the head of the staircase she heard a stealthy tread of feet, and saw through the balusters a glimmer of lights moving in regions far below, it was not fear, but a sense of triumph that came into her mind. Now at last she should convict the offenders of the often-denied offence of sitting up in the lower regions to unauthorized late hours. She hurried down three flights of stairs, but only to find total darkness and silence in the offices she invaded. On her return, as she was pushing

open a heavy swing-door that led into the front hall, she again caught sight of a suspicious gleam, which now seemed to come through the chinks of the drawing-room door. In her surprise, she let the swing-door fall to in her face, and dropped the papers she was carrying; and when she had gathered them up again, and come through into the hall at last, she was much startled to find herself face to face with Ellen Daly, fully dressed, and standing close to the door, with an extinguished candle in her hand.

"Is anything the matter? Is your mother ill?" Bride asked anxiously, as soon as she recovered her start.

"Oh, no, thank you! I wanted something, and came down to fetch it, and just now my candle went out. Will you light me back to my room? I am afraid of making a noise and awakening mamma."

"It seems to me there has been a great deal of noise in the house this hour past—have you observed anything?"

"I dare say there has. I have not been thinking about it till now."

"I shall go and call John."

"I advise you not: this house is famous for noises, and no good has ever come of hunting them that I ever heard. There are several Dalys that walk, you know, to say nothing of banshees, and the only thing to be done is to grow accustomed to them, and let them have their way."

"You really believe that?" cried Bride, unable to suppress a slight movement of contempt, as she noticed a peculiar intent look in Ellen's eyes, and a quiver in her voice, showing that tears were not far off. "No wonder the servants think they can roam about as they please at night under cover of ghost stories."

"I confess to having felt uncomfortable when my light went out," said Ellen, meekly, "and that I shall be glad to keep near you till we get back to our bedrooms."

"I am going in here first, to put some papers into the press, and then I shall listen again at the head of the kitchen stairs. Come with me, if you like."

The sound of living voices, or Bride's scepticism, had clearly driven the ghosts away, for all was perfectly still and dark when she and Ellen returned from the house-keeper's room, and stood in the hall looking upwards and downwards. Bride wished to search the lower rooms, but

Ellen professed great anxiety to return to her mother, and she did not like to detain her. She was half-disposed to set forth on a new voyage of discovery when they parted company at Mrs. Daly's door; but on looking into her own room she found Lesbia awake, and anxious to know the cause of her absence; and, rather than excite nervous fears in her, she decided to put aside her own curiosity and betake herself to bed.

It was not with an easy mind, however, that she did so. Several times after she had laid her head on the pillow, she started up again, fancying a sound, and when after many efforts she was at length sinking blissfully down into an abyss of sleep, she was brought back wide awake and distressingly alert again, by the recollection flashing into her mind that the candle in Ellen Daly's hand was covered by an extinguisher, and certainly could not have been blown out by accident as her words implied. What could she have come down stairs so late to seek? And what could have induced her to leave herself designedly in the dark? Bride felt she should have no peace of mind till she had fathomed these mysteries, and the night looked an uncomfortably long space for miserable suspicions to work out their torments in. Nothing but sleep could shorten it, and for a long time that relief seemed quite unattainable. If there should be such a serious blemish as want of truth and straightforwardness in her brother's idol, then indeed the sight of his infatuation would be hard to bear. And she could not till morning dawned decide whether the misery of seeing him continue in delusion, or the misery of having to act herself as the shatterer of his dreams, would be the most acute.

After wishing Miss Thornley good-night, Ellen stood holding the door of her room ajar, and watched through the crevice till Bride and her light finally disappeared; then she emerged again, and ran quickly down stairs, not pausing until she reached the drawing-room door. It was not so dark as it had been half-an-hour before, for the moon had now risen high enough to shine through the high windows and cross the wide dark staircase with bars of cold white light. Neither was it quite dark within the drawing-room, when, after listening for a second or two, she turned the handle and entered, for dusty streams of

moonlight came through holes in the shutters, and made green patches of light here and there on the floor, showing clearly two occupants, one of whom was stooping over a writing-desk, as if intently occupied thereat; the other standing upright in the middle of the room, with his arms folded, and the moonlight falling full on his face. At the slight sound Ellen made in coming forward the stooping figure sprang up, and Connor hurried to meet her.

"Well, you plucky conspirator—you girl of gold!" he cried; "have you got us the key?"

"Yes; but oh, Connor, this last freak of yours has almost killed me with the fright. Who do you think it was that made the noise with the green-baize door, that frightened you into extinguishing my candle?"

"The Daly that killed his twin-brother in a duel, or the one that walks about with his head under his arm—which?"

"It was Bride Thornley; and if I had not gone boldly to meet the noise, she would have marched straight in here, and found us together."

"Well, she would not have been the only member of her family I should have had the honour of showing to our cousin to-night."

"She did me good service, as it was, for she took me to the housekeeper's room herself, and I lifted the key of the conservatory door from its hook in the press over her very head while she was arranging her papers; but oh, the terror I was in till I saw her safe up stairs again."

"You used not to be so timid; it would have been nothing but fun to you a while ago to outwit the dragons that have driven us into exile. Anyway, Eileen aroon, you would not grudge D'Arcy his one visit to the Castle, if you had seen, as I have done to-night, how he loves every stone of it without ever having set his eyes on one of them before. There's no one has a better right to be here than he."

Ellen turned to Connor's companion, who had now moved to the door, and was standing near them.

"If we could have welcomed you properly, you know I should have been glad to see you here, cousin," she said.

"But you don't know how bitterly ashamed I am of intruding on you in such a fashion as this," he answered.

"When I found our retreat was cut off, I wanted to call the master of the house, and confess the scrape we had got ourselves into; but you appeared at the door of your room while we were discussing the point, and before I knew, Connor gave the signal that brought you up to our rescue."

"Connor was right; it would not have done to rouse the house: mamma might have been disturbed and made terribly anxious by Connor's unexpected appearance."

"I ought not to have let him persuade me to this freak, the wind-up of our enterprise here. I can only plead in excuse the longing that grew up through my childhood, when my mother used to talk to me in America of Castle Daly as if it were the very heart of Ireland, so that I could hardly feel myself pledged to the country as a son till I had been here and asserted my birthright."

Connor and Ellen had spoken hurriedly, in low whispers; but D'Arcy, during this speech, allowed his voice to rise to its ordinary key, and showed no more haste or embarrassment than if he had been conversing under ordinary circumstances in full daylight. Ellen looked up into his face, distinctly outlined, but pale and weird-looking in the moonlight, and a thrill almost of awe passed through her. The likeness to her father was so strong, that she could not help remembering stories, that had frightened her in her childhood, of departed Dalys who came back in the dead of night to throng the old rooms, and she felt tongue-tied, as if to speak would break a spell and banish the presence so often longed for.

Connor put his hand on his cousin's shoulder with a whispered "Hush!"

"He is not the right stuff for a conspirator to be made of," he said, turning to Ellen. "He would get up on to the wall his friends were hid behind, and make a fine speech to the constables who were looking for them. The trouble I have to keep him quiet!"

"When you have brought me into false positions, you mean. Never will I trust myself in your guidance again. The bargain was that I was to be taken through a suite of uninhabited rooms to see a certain picture, and get back without encountering a soul, and here we are caught in a trap like burglars."

"I knew, at the worst, there was a faithful mouse in the Castle with wits enough to set the lion free if he did get into trouble," said Connor; "and I would not have wanted help if the place had not been destroyed altogether with repairs and improvements."

"But I warned you, and told you not to come."

"If we had had any doubt of there being one to welcome us, we should have lost it listening to some words we overheard while we were waiting to slip in. Did not I like what you said to John Thornley about how I would thank him for his contemptible praise of me, if I had the chance of doing what I liked with his precious essay!"

"Why, where were you?"

"On the ledge of the lowest turret window, among the ivy, where we used to sit in old times and overhear conversations in the drawing-room, when the window chanced to be open. I had to hold D'Arcy fast, I can tell you, or he would have flung himself down and come striding through the drawing-room window to clap you on the back for standing up for us."

"He is mistaken, Miss Daly; I would not have moved, or lost a syllable for the world. If it has been much to me to come here and see the place where my mother's thoughts were till she died, it is even more to know that there is a voice in the old home that speaks up for me. It was a moment never to be forgotten."

"And you saw her picture?"

"Yes," said Connor, answering for his friend. "When all was still in the house, I let him in by the turret door, and took him up the creaking old turret stairs to the lumber-rooms, and then across the passage to our old schoolroom. He stayed mourning over the picture a thought too long, for when we got back to the passage we found the door into the lumber-rooms locked and the key gone."

"Miss Thornley must have come up to lock it before going to bed."

"No; better fun than that, it was little Lesbia herself. We stood in the dark at the end of the passage, and saw her tripping down stairs with the key in her hand. It was too provoking! I could see the top of her pretty head for two minutes and a half, by peeping over the balusters;

it was my turn then to want to fling myself over and fall at her feet. Would she have taken me for a ghost and screamed, I wonder!"

"Her head is much fuller of robbers than of ghosts, and that is why she makes a point of having the door to the lumber-rooms locked at night. I think you must have made more noise than you are aware of, for mamma was restless. I sat with her an hour, and was only just going to my own room when you saw me."

"By good luck, or we should have had to spend the night in the old schoolroom, and missed the car that is to meet us at Ballyowen. We are both due in Dublin by midday to-morrow. You may take comfort by knowing that this is the very last you'll see of me for some time to come."

"After this experience I shall never know when or where you may turn up. I shall never think you safe. Cousin D'Arcy, must you lead him into all this?"

"Ellen! what do you mean? Have I not been enough insulted to-night by John Thornley's praise, without your insinuating that I am a led dog, to be turned this way and that at D'Arcy's will?"

Heedless of Connor's interruption, Ellen continued to look up into the deeply-shadowed face, that in the uncertain light looked so familiar and yet so strange. "Mr. Thornley says," she went on, "that it is what will alter and spoil his whole life, and he is so thoughtless and young, and his father is dead. It is a terrible weight on my conscience to be hiding all this, not knowing quite whether it is a noble, or only a desperate thing you are doing."

She could see how the countenance she looked at darkened and changed; there was a moment's pause, as if he were struggling for voice to speak.

"Yes," he said hoarsely at last, "you are right—the concealment, the dark ways, the poor mean beginnings are *terrible*; but it is the path that has to be crept or wriggled through at the outset of every uprising. I can't tell you that we shall ever get further than that. I can't say that we shall not be trodden down into the earth we are creeping through like worms, before we ever come up so far as the daylight of the struggle. It may be simply a spoiling of our lives and nothing more; and you have appealed to

me to spare your brother. What can I say?—but that from the beginning to the end, whatever it is, there shall always be one life, one future, one reputation, that shall go first—before his, and be thrust always between him and blame or danger; that I can promise you.”

“That was not what I wanted; but thank you,” said Ellen, mournfully.

“Come, now,” interrupted Connor, “you two have talked sentiment long enough for to-night. If we are to catch the car we must start at once, and if we don’t intend to do that, we had better have stayed the night in the old school-room up stairs, where I could have written love-letters by the yard for Lesbia to find in the morning. They would have put her out of conceit with Pelham’s singing, I fancy. It’s too bad his having that pull over me, and I obliged to sit mum up in the ivy like an old owl, and hear it all going on.”

“Yes, indeed, I think you had better go now,” Ellen answered. “Miss Thornley must be asleep by this time, and the conservatory door leading out on the terrace can be opened and shut with very little noise. This way; I will turn the key after you, and put up the bars, so that there shall be no trace in the morning of anyone’s having gone through; but I hope you will never put my sisterly devotion to such a proof again, Connor.”

“It shall be for some more important purpose, if ever he does, I promise you,” said D’Arcy, as they passed through the conservatory.

“And I,” said Connor, putting his hands on Ellen’s shoulders, and stooping down to give her a parting kiss at the door, “promise you that when you come to think it over, you will have to confess that even this game has been well worth its little candle; and that your brother Connor is the boy with the quick wit to steal a march on the enemy, and give him a telling thrust when occasion offers. If John Thornley complains, don’t scruple to tell him, as a message from me, that Cassandra was right, and that the little minnows don’t care to be told they are bigger people than the whales, but resent such fibs as insults to their understanding.” Ellen stood still, watching the two receding figures, their shadows stretching across the moonlit lawn till they had passed the garden gate and disappeared

down the road ; and then she could not resist the temptation of stepping herself across the threshold into the garden to breathe the fresh night air, fragrant with flower-scents, and looking up at the windows of the silent house, shaded for sleep as still as if it were death. If she had dared, she would have liked to stay outside and wait for the summer sunrise, now not far off. The stealthy retreat into the house, and then the solitary hours of self-questioning, when the excitement had passed and she had betaken herself to the position of the silent sleepers overhead, looked extremely distasteful, but it had to be gone through. She left the key on the hall table, reflecting that she must trust to the servants' general reputation for carelessness, and to the pre-occupation of a morning before a journey, to escape any rigorous investigation as to the reason of its being there, and then she crept up to her own room. She had far less hope than *Bride* of being able to shorten the hours by sleep, for *her* uncomfortable reflections included some self-reproach and much self-questioning. She had always made herself the slave of Connor's schemes from earliest childhood, when the discrepancy between their father's and their mother's views on education created a large uncertain margin between permissible and unpermissible pleasures, concerning which a certain amount of contrivance seemed only necessary to avoid disagreeable collisions between the ruling powers.

It was an old, old habit to shield Connor, and further his undertakings, however wild ; but was it right, was it not leading now to more serious consequences than she had ever contemplated ? The warning sentences at the end of John Thornley's essay came back to her memory in all their terrible force of plain reasoning and strong, sober sense. If he should be right and Young Ireland wrong ? For a cause that was certainly good, she thought she could even bear to see her brother throw away his life, if it were necessary—sure that such throwing away was worthy, and would not fail of its reward in the far end.; but for a mistaken hope, for a result that would not be good if it were attained—that was the misery—to stand in the dark and choose as she felt these young men, Connor's leaders, were doing. Was it heroic, or was it only rash ?

Maddened with the misery they saw around them, was

it only a weak impatience that made them clutch at desperate remedies, or was it the divine instinct that, in a nation's darkest hours, draws its true sons together, and inspires them with that breath of new life which, blowing over dry bones picked bare by oppressors, and breathing through hearts turned to dust of despair, raises up from them a mighty army of strong men standing on their feet. As the light of a new day crept into the room, Ellen rose from her bed and sat at her window with a weary, aching pain at her heart, which the solemn beauty of the sunrise on the hills could not soothe away. That joyous sunlight would, she knew, illumine many a death-bed of starving men and women and children, before it faded in the red west. She longed for some friend whom she could consult in her present perplexities, without knowing beforehand that he or she had prejudged all the questions that troubled her. Most deeply she regretted that old habits of reserve, and the unexpressed but always felt division of interest in the family, made her mother more utterly out of reach as a helper and confidant than any stranger. She knew that if she were to confess her anxieties about Connor to her mother, it would not be welcomed as a mark of confidence, but regarded as a cruel attempt to lay fresh burdens on shoulders already sinking under their load. The first effort of the day must be to put away all trace of the night's agitation, and bring a cheerful countenance to her mother's bedside on her awakening.

CHAPTER XXX.

"The hope I dreamed of was a dream—
Was but a dream; and now I wake
Exceeding comfortless and worn and old,
For a dream's sake,

"Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake."

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

BRIDE THORNLEY did not feel called on to make any effort to assume cheerfulness. Her morning face, when

she looked into the inner room where Lesbia slept, showed such traces of her sleepless night, and was so lined with grave concern, that the sensitive conscience of that timid little personage awoke to a flutter of misgivings. Had she of late been treating this best of sisters with the openness that was justly her due? Could any circumstance have come to Bride's knowledge that rendered her suspicious of reserves on her part?

Yet should Bride be going to insist on complete confidence between them, where should she begin her confessions? Which end of the tangle of conflicting wishes and feelings, which she blained herself for concealing, should she unravel first before her sister's clear-judging eyes? When Bride came near to bestow her morning kiss, Lesbia let fall the weight of hair she had just gathered into her hands, and threw both arms round her sister's neck, looking at her with the humble, deprecating entreaty in her eyes, that had at times won concessions even from experienced Mrs. Joseph Maynard.

"Bride, you are angry with some one, but it is never me!" she exclaimed. "You are not thinking of going away, and leaving me in anger, for any little thing I may have done to vex you."

"My darling, no!" said Bride, stroking back the dark hair, and bestowing a shower of kisses on the smooth forehead and peach-bloom cheeks; "if it was any doubt about you, or anger against you, that made me unhappy, do you think I should have waited to speak about it till you asked me? No, the one thing that gives me comfort in every trouble that arises, is the certainty that there is clear daylight of understanding between us—that whoever else may have mysteries or concealments, there is never a shade of want of confidence between John and you and me."

"But, Bride," whispered Lesbia, and then the little upturned face, after suddenly becoming one vivid blush, buried itself on Bride's shoulder, and was lost altogether among the tumbled avalanche of hair that fell over it.

"My dear," said Bride, after waiting patiently some seconds for its reappearance, "is it not quite time for you to finish dressing? I heard John go down stairs some time ago, and I want very much to speak alone with him before

breakfast ; so, unless you have really something important to say to me——”

“Oh no, no—only nonsense,” cried Lesbia, peeping up.

“Then I think, dear, nonsense had better wait till another time, or I shall lose my only chance of a private talk with John before we set out.”

Bride had heard her brother enter the drawing-room, and, after remaining there some minutes, retire to his own study, and she was anxious to secure his attention before he became absorbed in looking over his essay. She had a feeling, though she did not like to put it into words even to herself, that the communication she was about to make to him ought to weigh against any intention to soften his essay he might have arrived at in his night musings.

She found him already standing before his writing-desk, but not writing. His hands were crossed behind his back, and he was staring down gloomily on some papers that lay on a portfolio before him. As soon as she entered, he called to her to come and join him.

“Whose handwriting should you say that was ?” he asked in a low, eager voice, pointing to a sheet of paper, with a few words scrawled in large letters on it, that lay uppermost. She raised it to examine it closely, but instead of reading, exclaimed in dismay, at the sight of several torn sheets of paper that lay below,—

“My dear John, is that your essay ?—surely you have not torn it up without my leave.”

“I wish I had ; I wish it was my own doing, then no more need be said. The perplexity is that I found my MS. in the state you see when I went into the drawing-room to fetch it away ten minutes ago. The first sheet is the only one untorn ; it lay over the shreds, and has a sentence scrawled on it—read.”

Bride looked down on the paper in her hand, and with difficulty, for the writing was in faint pencil, made out the words, “Cassandra was right ; irony is an exasperating weapon ; it will arouse the meanest of the mice to rally round their lions, and set them free to ravage.”

“What can it mean ?” she asked, puzzled.

“You called Ellen Daly ‘Cassandra’ last night. The person who wrote those lines must have overheard our conversation ; the question is, which of the servants in the

house would have understood it, and cared enough to take so daring a method of showing partizanship. There was opportunity enough since last night for anyone of them to have done it."

"Yes," said Bride thoughtfully; "for anyone in the house to have done it."

"Any of the servants, you mean?"

"My dear John," said Bride, slowly, fixing her eyes sorrowfully on his face, "do you think there is any one in the house besides ourselves and our guests who could spell such a word as Cassandra rightly, or remember it and apply it, if heard once?"

"That," said John quickly, "reduces us to the supposition that the house has been entered during the night by some one who knows all our family ways. It is an uncomfortable idea. I shall hardly like to leave the place to-day."

"Nor I, with Lesbia in it. John, without knowing anything of this accident, I came to you to suggest that you had better start for London alone to-day; I remaining behind to look after Lesbia."

"But why? you say you knew nothing of this. For Heaven's sake don't be mysterious, Bride! You know of all things in the world I hate inuendoes."

"Not more, I hope, than I hate all mysterious and underhand doings. If you wish me to speak plainly you must give me time. I must think for a moment, and try to disentangle impressions from facts, so as to avoid saying unnecessarily what will pain you."

"Well," said John, when he had watched Bride for about a minute absently twisting the sheet of paper she still held into a neat cornucopia, "you had better begin at once; there is no need for such extreme caution. When you talk of giving me pain, I know, of course, whom your communication concerns, and, to save your scruples, I may as well tell you at once that if it is anything against *her* I am not going to believe it."

"I am sorry for you though, John, for it is not a conjecture of mine you have to hear. I shall merely tell you a little fact; and I am afraid you won't like it."

"Don't be afraid, I shall not care. I put the fact of her trustworthiness above any other you can tell me."

"I will simply state what I saw. I sat up last night writing, and when I had finished my business I left my room to replace the account-books I had been using in the press in the housekeeper's room. I heard steps in the passage as I was coming down stairs, and fancied I saw a light moving below. Thinking that some of the servants were up late, I went to the offices first, and found all dark there. On my way back I saw the light again streaming through the crevices of the drawing-room door. Unluckily I dropped my books with some noise, and when I had picked them up again the light was gone; but, coming from the direction of the drawing-room, I met Ellen Daly with a candle in her hand extinguished."

"You spoke to her, I suppose, and learned how she chanced to be there?"

"She said she had come down to look for a book, I think, and that her candle had gone out; and when I questioned her about the lights and the noise, she talked of ghosts. I am sorry to say it, John, but I saw she wished to prevent my going into the drawing-room."

"Bride, I cannot have you believe that she went there to destroy my manuscript."

"If you like I will not say so; I promised to tell the fact and leave you to draw what inference you pleased."

"It's absurd. She would have torn the papers across before my face if she had meant to do it. You know she would."

"No, John, I don't. There is a great deal of sensitiveness and timidity oddly mixed up with her rashness. It's Irish. I notice the same thing about all the people here. They will be wildly defiant at one minute and the next, when the excitement is over, they will use the subtlest stratagems to hide their revenge."

"I thought you were not going to give your opinions."

"You force me to argue, and I want to show you that I can believe she has done this thing and yet not condemn her entirely. You heard how vehemently she spoke last night. She said she hated every word of the essay, and refused to make suggestions. I can't help thinking the secret destruction of what she hated a natural result with her of the over-excitement."

John's face flushed painfully; he turned his back on Bride, took a turn in the room and came back to her.

"No," he said, "she did not do it: a guest in our house and behaving to us all this last week in such frank sweet friendly fashion, that even against sober conviction I could not help at times believing in the possibility of pleasing her—she could not have dealt me such a blow in the dark. Bride, I should be less dissatisfied with you if you showed more surprise."

"I can be as indignant as you please at the insult to you."

"My complaint is that you so quietly take it for granted that *she* did it."

"Well, then, I will confess that I have been cherishing more serious suspicions still, and that it is almost a relief to connect Miss Daly's mysterious behaviour last night with the destruction of your essay. I have been fancying that she was perhaps carrying on some secret system of communication with her foolish brother and that rebel friend of his, who appears to have such a hold on her imagination, and with whom I suspect she is in love. I had made up my mind not to leave Lesbia alone in such an unwholesome atmosphere of intrigue."

"You will call it infatuation, but I must say that the notion of your thinking it necessary to guard Lesbia's truthfulness lest it should be contaminated by Ellen Daly is simply amazing to me."

"We won't drift into a discussion of their respective characters; the breakfast-bell will ring in a minute, and we have to decide what to do. Of course I am ready to go or stay, as you please; but I confess I shall not have a happy hour apart from Lesbia if I leave her under these circumstances."

"But if you stay here, the Dalys can hardly prolong their visit. They will go back to Eagle's Edge, and to all the difficulties and privations I thought I had helped them out of for a time. The thought will bring me back from London before I have half finished my work there."

"You would come back to look after her? My dear John, that is devotion, and for what? She will never even thank you. She will just march over all your safeguards and precautions straight to her rebel Irish poet,

and to a disastrous fate of one kind or another. She has it in her."

"Who is Cassandra now? But prophesy as you like, at the bottom of your heart, you know nothing you say will make any difference to me."

"If you have resolved to set yourself up as a windmill for all Young Ireland to tilt against, I think it very likely you will do it, and that I shall have to stand aside and see. But there is the bell. What are we to do?"

"Let us leave our plans to be settled by the chapter of accidents. Some unexpected explanation may come out that will make you ashamed of your suspicions."

"Then you must allow me to mention my midnight expedition and the fate of your essay at breakfast. It will give me the opportunity of making observations."

"Of course you will not hint at suspicions?"

"Would you rather do it yourself?"

"No, no; if anything is to be said you must say it. I should feel all the time that I was laying a trap for the most ingenuous person in the world, and I should betray how sneaky I felt."

"I shall not feel the least sneaky. I merely give her the opportunity of explaining, and I hope most heartily that she will clear herself."

The party at breakfast was an unusually silent one, and Bride did not find the task of introducing the subject of the night's adventures so easy as she had expected. A dead weight of expectation seemed to brood over every one, and she cleared her throat once or twice before she felt able to launch her thunderbolt in the heavy air. Pelham was the only person present who looked unconcerned, and ate his breakfast as usual, and she knew by experience what a very weak conversational reed he was to depend on.

He received her first remark that she had passed a disturbed night and been alarmed by unaccountable noises in the house, with an unconcerned "Did you, indeed?" and Bride, whose ears were still tingling with the shaky, peculiar sound her own voice had had in speaking, looked imploringly across the table towards John, in the hope that he would put in a word to help her. He carefully avoided her eye, and the dead silence that followed was broken at last by Ellen's saying, quickly and nervously,

"The noises don't affect us much, you see. We are used to be rather proud of our ghosts. Only Pelham does not believe in them."

Bride was sufficiently provoked to long to throw back into John's teeth his late words, "The most ingenuous person in the world." All her caution and politeness could not restrain her from casting an indignant look on Ellen, and allowing her voice to rise to a tone of displeasure as she continued—

"I should be glad enough to accustom myself to your theory of ghosts, and would compound for any amount of noise, if our midnight visitors were satisfied with walking through the rooms, leaving things there as they find them. They did not behave themselves so inoffensively last night."

"Do you mean to say that the house has been robbed?" cried Pelham, interested at last. "I should not have thought it possible. Housebreaking, except for the sake of getting arms, has hitherto been an unknown crime in these parts. I hope you have not lost anything of value."

"Nothing has been stolen," said Bride, slowly; "but a very serious injury has been inflicted on my brother. A manuscript that he left on the drawing-room table last night was found this morning torn into shreds; and, as if to show that it had not been done by accident, a mysterious message was scribbled on the outer sheet, the only one left untorn. We both feel anxious to trace this strange act to its author, and shall be thankful to any one who can give us a clue to better understanding it."

"Speak for yourself, Bride," interrupted John, hastily; "I am not at all sure that I wish for further light, or that I think the subject worth investigation."

During the latter part of Bride's speech he had raised his eyes anxiously to Ellen's face, and the rapid changes there, the deep flush, and then the ebbing away of colour to extreme pallor, were so many blows struck at his heart. His own face grew as agitated as hers, and Lesbia, looking from one to the other, cried out in dismay,

"How frightened you all do look, to be sure! Is it very alarming? Might we all have been murdered in our beds last night? Are things beginning to be here as they were

in the French Revolution, when the *chauffeurs* did such dreadful things, do you suppose?"

"Don't excite yourself, Lesbia, pray," said John, sharply; "there is nothing whatever for you to trouble yourself about."

"But, John, you are as pale as death yourself; and you can't think how frightened of robbers I am since Bride made me read about the *chauffeurs*."

"Bride had better intermit her doses of history, if they suggest nothing better to you than ridiculous fears."

"Not so very ridiculous," said Pelham, firing up. "Surely such a strange occurrence in the middle of the night is sufficient ground for some alarm? I hope you don't mean to pass it over without inquiry. Miss Thornley asked for a clue. I don't know that this is worth much, but I remember having an impression in the night that I heard steps on the terrace, and when I looked out of my window, just about sunrise, I saw Murdock Malachy leaning against the post of the side gate. I wondered at the time how he came to be there at that hour. I have observed him several times lately hanging about the place in a suspicious way. He should be questioned."

"No, Pelham," said Ellen, impetuously, "don't accuse him. He has nothing whatever to do with this, I can answer for it. Don't let us bring him into our quarrels again. He had the worst of it long ago."

"I bear no malice against him for long ago, I assure you, Ellen," said Pelham, gravely; "I merely mentioned what I have observed. This is no quarrel of ours either, as I understand it."

"And," said John Thornley, leaning forward in his chair and trying to catch Ellen's eye, while his face flushed and softened into an expression of earnest kindness, "let us put the word quarrel quite away from this matter, whoever is concerned in it. The essay was doomed to destruction last night when you pronounced it unjust; the person who destroyed it only anticipated my own intentions. If it was meant for a lesson or a warning, I am content to take it, however much I may wish it had been given more directly."

Ellen rose from her seat while John was speaking. "I

am going up stairs to mamma," she said, quickly, and then turning to Bride, she added, "You are not intending to leave the house quite immediately, I hope. I shall want to speak alone with you after I have seen mamma."

"She has all but owned it," said Bride to John when the rest of the party had dispersed, and they were again alone. "No, don't look as if you thought I was triumphing over you; it is not that indeed. I am more sorry for her than you would believe; and when you are out of the way, and I have her to myself, I believe I shall get into perfect charity with her again, in spite of everything."

"You are determined to remain here and let me go to London alone?"

"I am afraid I must. Did you see how poor little Lesbia started and changed colour when Pelham mentioned Murdock Malachy's mysterious haunting of the house, which, by the way, had not escaped me? The silly little thing has let herself be drawn into sharing some secret, and must not be left to guide herself through its consequences. I shall stay with her till you can have us both in London with you. Please let that be soon. You can invite the Dalys to spend the whole summer at the Castle when we are out of it."

"I should not like to see their faces when I gave the invitation, though. Bride you should recollect our horror of patronage, and take into consideration the added bitterness that the sudden reversal of our positions towards each other must give to offers of help from us. I don't see how they could bear to live in Lesbia's house without some plausible reason being invented to induce them to do it. I thought I had succeeded in providing such an ingenious one; and this miserable business baffles me. Ah, there was a great deal destroyed last night in the tearing up of those sheets, besides my poor criticisms."

"I wish my interview with Miss Daly were well over. I do not look forward to it."

"Do you suppose she is going to confide it all to you?"

"Some little part, perhaps—not all; but let me have her to myself. See, she has left her mother's room, and joined Pelham on the terrace. When she has talked it out with him, she will be ready for me."

"Let her understand that I am not curious—I shall ask no questions."

"As you are going away in an hour or two, and I shall not see you again for a month, I may venture perhaps to make this assertion. By the time we meet again your curiosity will probably be so far diminished as to allow of your occasionally talking to me without trying to worm out the secret."

Ellen meanwhile, from the window in her mother's room, had espied Pelham taking a moody turn on the terrace alone; and running down stairs quickly, and through the open front door, she came up behind him and slipped her hand through his arm. He turned rather crossly.

"It's too cold and damp for you to be out without anything on your head," he said.

For the splendid sunrise had been succeeded by a march of storm clouds across the sky, the distance was shrouded in thick darkness, and a few heavy sullen drops were falling from minute to minute.

"As if I had not been rained upon all my life," said Ellen. "Pelham, you must let me have a word or two with you. Oh, what a long time ago it seems since we walked here and heard the Angelus bell."

"It was only last night."

"The weather may well be changed; it is not so altered as my feelings are."

"What has happened to change them?"

"Last night I thought we should stay here all the summer happily with Lesbia, and now I know that I am walking up and down this terrace for the last time—that never, never again as long as I live will I come here again. Pelham, did you not understand at breakfast that Mr. and Miss Thornley suspect me of having torn up that essay of his?"

"You! but you did not do it?"

"Oh no."

"Then why on earth did not you say so? Come with me and say it now."

"No, for I cannot prove my words; I can't explain the suspicious circumstances; and, Pelham, I will confide in you, and no one else. I know who did it, and I mean never to tell."

"Then you are very much to blame, and I will have nothing to say to it. I suppose it's Malachy you are screening. You and Connor choose to look on him as a victim, on account of the past, and I say nothing against it; but when it comes to sacrificing your own character——"

"If they can't find out what I am," interrupted Ellen, drawing herself up, but with a sob in her voice, "I cannot help it. Pelham, dear, it is not Malachy I am screening. Will you walk back to the end of the terrace with me, and listen quietly to what I have to say before you speak to either of the Thornleys?"

"If you like."

"Pelham, do you remember the evening when we crossed over from England that last time?"

"Of course I remember; what of it?"

"You were annoyed with me because I wanted to go on deck when it was windy. You thought it unladylike, or something, and we disputed until papa came and took me up to walk with him. He had overheard our little quarrel, and all the time we were pacing the deck together, he was talking to me about you, praising you and reproving me for not minding you. It was as if he knew it was the last long talk he and I should ever have."

"Praising me?"

"Yes; he told me to trust to you more than to Connor, for that you were the brother to be depended on, though you pretended then to care so little for home. He said he knew you had a true heart at the bottom, and however you might be annoyed by our different ways, he was sure you would stand by me and protect me if trouble came upon us. He was afraid, he said, that Connor would always be more of a charge than a protection, and that I must try to guide him, and both of us look up to you."

"He said all that about me?" cried Pelham, his face flushing with emotion; "I had no idea that he thought in that way of me. I used to believe that he never noticed me—that he hardly knew anything about me."

"Ah, you were wrong there; he was always noticing."

"But I disgusted him by my reserve, just as I disgust Connor and you, so that you can't now believe how earnestly I desire to help you."

"Papa understood you, you see, in spite of reserve; and

I am going to show you to-day that I take you at his word, by asking you to stand by me, as he said you would, though it is in a way you won't like, and though I can only give you a half confidence."

"Of course I will stand by you, Ellen—who else should? but I don't see how I can do it effectually unless you will tell me the whole truth."

"But that is just the favour I am asking of you, dear—to act for me without knowing all my reasons. I feel that we ought not to stay here a day longer, and I want you to take it on yourself to order our going without questioning me too closely why it must be so. It is a great deal to ask, I know, but I think you will do it for me. I have thought it all out since daylight this morning. You said last night that it was bitter to live on favour, but how much keener will be the bitterness if we feel that we are acting treacherously by our helpers?"

"Treacherously! what do you mean, Ellen? Where is the treachery?"

"It feels like treachery to have concealments from firm friends who are serving you with all their might; and I told you just now that I shall have to hide something from the Thornleys, and in hiding it leave them to believe I have injured them myself."

"How can you do it? how can you bear to seem so mean?"

"Oh, Pelham, don't. I am not sure that I can bear it at all. I am trying to put the thought of what they must think of me out of my head. Only I know that I cannot bear to stay an hour longer in this house seeming what you say to them."

"You owe the plain truth to them and to me."

"No, I think not; because the truth will not make our ingratitude seem any the less, and it would do harm to several other people; and besides, what happened last night was only one of my reasons for thinking we ought to go. I did not know of this suspicion against me this morning when I was pondering over our position here, and it grew clear to me then, that if you and I were to speak out what we know and feel, we are the last people Bride Thornley would fix upon as companions for Lesbia in her absence. Knowing this, ought we to stay?"

"If you talk to Lesbia about Connor, if you convey messages between them, then I do call it treachery."

"No, Pelham, I have not done that; but I know that he has sent her tokens and letters, and I have held my tongue about it. I believe that if she went to England with her brother and sister, and heard nothing about us for six months, she would forget us all, and it would be best for her that she should."

"Last night you told me not to be *farouche*."

"Yes, because I really think your distant, shy manner makes her suspect your feelings, and fixes her thoughts on you. It is impossible to act quite openly and naturally while our feelings are so complicated. The only safe thing is to make a complete break, to cut ourselves away from them, and then—then at least, we are free; and if misfortunes come upon us, we shall not drag more people down into the vortex than need be."

"You have changed your opinion since last night, when you said you would accept any service from John Thornley."

"Yes, I know; one goes on walking along a bit of road seeing only the day's journey, till suddenly something makes one take a far-sighted look round, and one sees where one is going. This time, dear, you and I have to turn right round for we are going wrong."

"You advise me, then, to go straight to John Thornley and tell him—my—my feelings for Lesbia, as a reason for leaving the place at once and never seeing them again?"

"No, I don't think you should speak of your feelings for her, unless you mean to ask for her, and your pride won't let you do that. It would be an unnecessary humiliation. I only meant to make them understand that you and I together feel we must go. I know it is selfish to put the hard task of speaking on you, but you are the strong one, and our father said I was to come to you; and besides they don't suspect you of anything—they have no quarrel with you."

"John Thornley said there was to be no quarrel with anyone."

"He is the most generous person in the world, I think; but that does not help me. He believes that I have injured him. We cannot stay in his house after that."

"It will be a great blow to our mother, I am afraid ; she likes being here."

"Yes, but she will reconcile herself to going at once if you tell her it is right."

"I suppose it is right. If you are really suspected, and cannot or will not clear yourself, we have no choice."

"You will say as little as possible about me, only that we agree in wishing to go home to-day."

"If I may not exculpate you, I shall certainly say very little about you."

"Then you will go and speak now, Pelham, before it is too late. I will wait outside. I shall be on the higher terrace in aunt Ellen's garden, when you want me."

The storm-clouds had now blown over towards the higher hills, leaving clear, blue sky over some of the nearer peaks. Ellen climbed the little rocky path to the highest terrace of the garden, and stood for a long time looking round. Connor and D'Arcy had been there last night ; there were marks of their feet on the wet path that led up to the terrace. How much had the moonlight shown them of the little hill-side garden that long ago Aunt Ellen had planned and laid out for her own special domain, Ellen wondered. It was sad to think of her son coming there by stealth, but soon no one of them would be better off, they would all be strangers alike, and as time went on forgotten—forgotten of course. Ellen thought of the day when she and Anne O'Flaherty had walked up and down the terrace, talking of the journey to England in prospect then, when Anne had told her that her lot in life might be like her own, to serve those she loved secretly, without receiving thanks for her service. Ah, but had Anne in her experience ever been called upon for service that cost such bitter pain as this secret bearing of the consequences of Connor's folly caused Ellen to-day ? Anne had thought of sacrifices for assured good results, not of bearing to be involved in blame through the folly of the person served, or perhaps not served, ruined, by keeping his secret. The battle of contending thoughts that had racked her mind all night seemed about to begin again, but Ellen made a strong effort and put it away. There was another side of the question that had something more of comfort in it, and she turned her thoughts resolutely to that. She

could at least be sure she was right in breaking completely with the Thornleys and Lesbia. It was the only honest course to take, unless she gave up Connor and his patriotic dreams, and resolutely declined to be involved in any further risk he might run. If she chose the side of danger, and yet could not openly declare her choice, she was bound to watch that no friend of hers was involved unwittingly in the trouble that might follow—Lesbia through affection to Connor, or another person through affection for herself. It was best—it was necessary to break suddenly whatever ties had grown up between herself and the friends—no the one friend—who ever since the night of her father's death had stood apart in her thoughts as one of those "peculiar people whom death makes dear."

It would be ungenerous to let him suffer again through her, when further misfortunes came; and after this last experience of Connor's recklessness, what hope was there that successive troubles would not come? It was best to let the friendship go with other things. There could be no question that honesty pointed to the sacrifice, yet Ellen found it harder than she had expected to acquiesce in the decree. She felt it almost like voluntarily putting away from her a last remnant of her father's love and care, which had clung round her till now. Without ever having put the thought into words, she had all along had an inward conviction that when John Thornley took her father's dead body out of her arms on the morning of his death, he had deliberately taken upon himself the task of caring for her, as her father had cared. She had been depending on this care more than she had been aware of through the past, long, sad months, and now it seemed very hard to put it away, while the horizon all around them looked darker than ever; while certain poverty and hard privations were close upon them, and fears of uncertain shape were hovering in the distance.

She had begun to think that Pelham had forgotten her, and was turning back to the house to look for him, when she saw Bride Thornley coming towards her, up the steep garden path. Her face and manner as she hurriedly approached Ellen, were marked by the tokens of mingled stiffness and nervousness that were sure signs in her of great agitation.

"I persuaded your brother Pelham to let me come and

“speak to you in his stead,” she began, breathlessly, as soon as she was near enough to speak. “He seems to have taken some strange notion into his head that you are all going to leave us immediately. I gather that it is your wish chiefly; and he has gone now to prepare your mother. But I cannot bear to have it settled without more consideration. John is so dreadfully hurt. Would you object to turn back with me to the terrace, and let me have a word—just one word—with you in private?”

The word was evidently a very hard one for Bride to speak. She made one or two false starts, and then burst forth impetuously and somewhat incoherently, “You told me once that you were sure I should not blame you for sympathising with your brother, and serving him at all risks; and your saying so makes me hope that you will understand what I am going to ask you now in my brother’s interest and forgive me if I seem impertinent.”

“I do indeed,” interrupted Ellen, quickly. “You must not think, please, that I am going away because I am offended at anything you said this morning, or that I shall be offended at anything you may say. I don’t see how you can help believing and feeling as you do about what happened last night; and I know I have no right to be angry.”

“There!” cried Bride; “I have spoken inconsiderately again. I came out to apologize to you as John entreated me to do, and I see I have only repeated my offence. But, Ellen, I was going on to say more; I was going to ask you as a great favour to myself, as something I shall value beyond any gift that could be given me, to send me back to the house with some little word of explanation that would make us all happy together again. A very few words, would I am sure, be enough to make all the painful impressions of last night pass away like a dream. Cannot you take me for a friend so far as to speak such words privately to me? Perhaps I may not always have appeared as cordial and kind as, indeed, I have felt; but never in my life have I begged anything of anyone as earnestly as I beg this of you. Do not refuse to satisfy me; do not reject me as a friend.”

Ellen did not answer immediately; she turned away her

eyes from Bride's agitated face, and looked down for some time at the castle beneath them, with its dear old familiar turrets and its ivy-clad upper windows, through which so many editions of her childish self seemed to look out at her, beckoning her back to it. A strong feeling came to her as she looked; that having or not having Bride Thornley for a friend, meant for her restoration to all the old joys of home, or going out solitary somewhere—into a wilderness.

But it would not do to balance consequences. She had decided what was the honest course a few minutes before, and could only speak the words that pledged her to it. She turned towards Bride again, and saw as she began to speak to her, how all the late kindly emotions died out of her face, and how it stiffened into hard disapproval as she completed her sentence. "I am sorry," Ellen faltered, "but I think it had better rest as my brother and I decided when we talked together just now. I am not sure that we did right in coming here; and I am quite sure we are doing right in going away. We shall only make it worse by talking."

"My first feeling was the same as yours, I confess," answered Bride, coldly; "but I promised my brother to use all the influence I had to dissuade you from a resolution which he thought too unfriendly. He at least has been a consistent friend to you and yours."

"We know it," said Ellen, sadly, "Pelham and Connor and I; and we are grateful. You will never believe that of me again, I am afraid, but it is true."

They left the terrace and walked back to the house in silence, parting at the hall door. Bride sought out her brother in his study to tell him of her failure, and Ellen went back to her mother's room. She feared she had another hard task awaiting her there, but she found that Pelham had spared her all trouble by expressing his wish to return to Eagle's Edge so decidedly that Mrs. Daly had no heart left to make objections.

Not only was Pelham's will law to her, but the suspicion roused by his manner, that his pride had received a wound, awoke an answering pride in her heart that stilled every remonstrance, and steeled her to play her part with the quiet, cold dignity of former times. Not for

worlds would she allow John Thornley or Lesbia to suspect a shade of reluctance in her to leave a house where her son had possibly been slighted.

It was announced through the household that Mr. and Miss Thornley had postponed their journey to London indefinitely, and the carriage that had been brought out to carry them to meet the public car was remanded for an hour, and ordered to come round again by and by to convey Mrs. Daly and Ellen to Eagle's Edge.

Lesbia wandered vaguely from room to room, too restless to settle to any occupation, and too secretly uneasy in her conscience to venture on the close cross-questioning of John and Bride that anxiety and curiosity prompted. If only she had had courage to acquaint Bride with that foolish little incident of the shamrock wreath, and with the still more foolish birthday visit, and the little notes and love-tokens from Connor that Murdock Malachy had been surreptitiously forcing upon her during these last days, she would have felt freer now to act according to her wishes, and as mistress of the house resent the summary dismissal of her own invited guests. But for these recollections she might even have ventured (was she not a great heiress, and perhaps obliged on that ground to take more upon herself than became other girls?) to push open the library door, which all the morning stood just ajar, affording her a glimpse of Pelham Daly standing in the recess of the new bay window and playing the devil's tattoo on a pane; and entering, she might have broken in on his reverie with some little question that would have led on to an answer at least, perhaps to an explanation of their going away that would let her know a great deal more than Bride or John could tell. There could be no harm in just that. Why Bride herself had approvingly read aloud to her the history of an heiress who in very long verses drew a purple curtain and disclosed herself to her poet lover—

“With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.”

Lesbia stood on tiptoe in the middle of the drawing-room, and craned her neck to catch a glimpse of her own face reflected in the round convex mirror, which repeated the glories of the room in a long, lessening vista. But she

had been crying, and her eyes showed the red lines round them terribly plainly; and she thought she looked a fright, and did not dare go into the library and enact Lady Geraldine's courtship just yet; and the moments and the devil's tattoo went on—and on—and on—till the opportunity was lost. There was a noise of carriage wheels on the ground; voices were heard calling in the hall; John and Bride came out of the study together; Ellen and Mrs. Daly appeared slowly descending the stairs; the music on the library bay window-pane ceased suddenly; and the question of whether to enter or not to enter the half-opened door, was decided for vacillating Lesbia without further consideration on her part.

Some of the out-door servants, old friends of the Dalys, whose services Lesbia had retained, assembled round the hall door to take a last look at the departing guests, and say "good-bye." It made a diversion of interest, and caused a little confusion at the last that was equally welcome to Ellen and to Bride, as it covered any lack of cordiality in the manner of leave-taking which might otherwise have been too apparent. Mrs. Daly leaned out of the carriage window as they were driving away, to take a last look at the castle and wave a farewell to their late hosts; but Ellen and Pelham equally avoided last looks at anything, or anyone, and would not appear to see that John and Lesbia had followed them to the end of the terrace, and were looking after the carriage with an intentness somewhat inconsistent with the hurried, cold good-byes.

"This is my real farewell to the castle," Mrs. Daly said, as she sank back into the carriage when they had passed the gate. "When we left it last autumn I could not think of the place, and now I hardly understand why it is so hard for me to tear myself away. My love for Castle Daly has indeed come too late; if I had only felt about it as I do now when I carried you all off to England, five years ago, I should have acted a very different part, and results might have been different. I might not be leaving it a widow to-day; it might be home still."

Ellen took her mother's hand and kissed it, feeling that she had never loved her half so well before as she did now that the word of regret had passed her lips; and

when sorrow was no longer a sealed subject between them.

During the rest of the silent drive to Eagle's Edge, her mind was full of recollections of the first time they had left the castle. Her mother blamed herself; but was it all her fault? One by one the circumstances that led to their first banishment recurred to Ellen's memory. It was a rash act of Connor's, connived at and concealed by herself, that had been the final cause of their departure then—then, as to-day. Should she call this strange repetition of events in her life a strange fate?—or was it true, as she had read in a philosophical German novel the other day, that character makes fate; and that lives woven and interwoven with each other will still repeat the same events, and clothe themselves in the same colours, while the characters remain unchanged?

CHAPTER XXXI.

The longer life the more offence ;
The more offence the greater pain ;
The greater pain the worse defence ;
The worse defence the lesser gain ;
The loss of gain long ill doth try ;
Therefore come death and let me die."

WYAT.

"I WONDER whether Ugolino's famine-tower had any windows in it," Ellen observed to Connor one morning, some months after these events, as they stood at the open door of the house at Eagle's Edge, once more watching Pelham's progress down the road on his daily ride.

"It was a very poor invention for a place of torture if it had not," Connor answered quickly. "Lord Clarendon and the English Government know much better how to build up a famine tower for the nation of Ugolinos they are starving. To be walled in away from food, and famish, was just nothing; the real torture is, to stand out in the open, and see fields waving with corn, and cattle on all the hills, and to die in face of them, divided from them by invisible law-walls skilfully built up, which let sight and sound and smell through."

"I was thinking of windows with a more distant outlook," Ellen went on rather wearily, for during the two days that Connor had been home from Dublin she had discovered that listening to political harangues from him, whether she assented to or disagreed from the opinions he enunciated, equally fretted the sore wounds in her heart. "I wish, dear Connor," she said, "that you would not always force me to turn my thoughts towards blaming other people, and longing for fierce remedies. You mesmerise me, while you talk, into feeling with you, and it is very terrible. I think the misery would be easier to bear if we laid some of the blame of it on ourselves, or called it, as the poor patient victims do, while they die under it, 'the hand of God.'"

"Some one said something like that to D'Arcy one day. I wonder what you would have thought if you had seen how angry he was. He called it blasphemy—speaking ill of God's name—attributing to Him unrighteousness and wrong."

"I know there is unrighteousness and wrong doing of men mixed up with the calamity, and that it need not have been so hopeless if it had been rightly met; but still I think the dying people see the furthest when they call it the hand of God, and feel no bitterness in lying under it. It is *that* to each one of them—the hand opening the way of escape from their fever beds—or if they are not to die bringing other good to them, if we could only see it."

"So long as such a doctrine does not induce people to sit still and be content to be crushed, I have no objection to it. After all, it is only what D'Arcy himself says sometimes. He thinks that the stress of this misery, the horror bred by these last cruelties, which have left half the nation to perish through neglect and misgovernment will draw our people together, and make us resolute in claiming the management of our own land for ourselves at least. 'Then,' he says, 'these three millions who have died already in the famine will, in after days, be as certainly counted martyrs for the country as those others who have got to die yet in the battle-field for our independence, before it is won.' Looking at events in that light, I can see how good may come even out of the famine."

"But that is not my view—quite the contrary. I understand why King David chose the pestilence, of the three evils offered to him, rather than that his army should flee before the enemy. I think with him, that anything is better than falling into the hands of man. Your hope is my terriblest fear, Connor, dear."

"Ah! you are getting corrupted. It is the abominable journal that comes to you from England with blue marks along the pages, to draw your attention to essays on Irish questions, full of counsels of cowardice and baseness, that is turning you sympathies the wrong way. You should stick to reading the *Nation*, and then you'd know the truth."

"I have not had an English paper with blue marks since the one I sent on to you to Dublin three weeks ago: the sender has forgotten me, or left off writing essays on Irish questions. The paper I received this morning came from Pelham Court, and the scored column contained an account of a public meeting at Fakenham, with Uncle Charles in the chair, whence a petition was sent up to Parliament for the repeal of the Maynooth Grant, as the most likely remedy for the Irish famine."

"Eh! kick the lion in the face, now that he is supposed to be dying, hard enough, and perhaps he will awake. I hope you mean to send the paper back with comments. Let me write them between the lines."

"No, no; there was a letter posted at the same time as the newspaper, with twenty pounds in it for my starving people. I can't send that back or insult the givers, Connor. Marmaduke has been sending me money all through the summer, ever since people in England began to realize what it was that was happening here. I do believe he must have done without some few comforts himself to help us—kid gloves, perhaps, or scent, or some luxury from one of his five meals a day."

"That is a great deal for an English Guardsman to sacrifice for Irish savages, whom he rather hopes to have a chance of knocking on the head some day soon; but don't believe in the disinterestedness of his conduct, Eileen bawn. By and by he'll come to you and say, 'Look here, to please you I have saved a hundred Irish paupers from dying of starvation, whom in my conscience

I think had better have died, and now I expect you to pay me by giving me yourself for life. One hundred for one is generous measure.' He may not put it in those words—he would not know how to express himself so well—but you'll find that is about the gist of the matter with him."

"No I shall not—he understands me too well; and, as far as he knows how, he has been generous. I can't be as bitter as you are, Con, for I know that there is real generosity and real help given to us, though it does not all reach those who want it most."

"Is it these generous acts that make the windows of your famine tower, then?"

"I was not thinking of them when I spoke; I was imagining ourselves living in a great famine-tower, as indeed we are, seeing the dying faces in it, and hearing the groans that fill it all day, and every now and then being obliged to climb up into a turret and look through a window, out on to a world where people are eating and drinking, and gossiping and dancing, and where our famine-tower is only one little dark spot on their distant horizon, that they can see when they try to look at it, but generally forget. The turret windows from which I am obliged to look out on such a world are letters like those that came for me this morning."

"Ah, I was intending to tell you I expected my share of one of them, unless I am mistaken in the handwriting."

"You had better let me come to that one by degrees, for I doubt whether its contents will put you into a good humour for hearing the others."

"I am in no violent hurry. You had three letters this morning, had you not?"

"One was only from Cynthea O'Roone to ask me to send her an embroidery pattern I promised her long ago. The O'Roone's are living near Westport now, and Cynthea says she and her sisters can never leave their own garden because of the state of the country, and that they generally sit at breakfast with their blinds down, not to see on the doorstep the dead bodies of the people who have crawled there in the night to die."

"So they want embroidery patterns to amuse them in the house? I wonder they don't go to Dublin or England to be further off."

"Their father has got one of the government relief appointments."

"Just the man for it. How I wish Pelham had not put himself into the category of interceptors of public bounty. I would rather starve."

"My dear, if Pelham did not work for us, and the Thornleys pay us rent for a house they don't care now to live in, we should all have starved long before this. Pelham does the work as well as such work can be done."

"And you don't shut yourself up and work worsted like Cynthea O'Roone. After all, I don't know what else *she* could do. Dublin is full of such people shutting themselves up, in one fashion or another, from the sight of the dead bodies. It all comes of the demoralization of the Union. If we were a true nation governing ourselves, feeling we could help ourselves, one half of us would not have to shut ourselves up in order not to see the other half die under the clever management of a foreign government, whose chiefs secretly think that the land is well rid of us, and that the underground roads are the safest to banish by. Exiles can come back, but not dead men."

"I don't believe it has anything to do with governments. People show their true characters in times like these, and we have plenty of the nobler sort. Did you hear, by the way, that Father Peter is dead? Biddy O'Rea brought the news this morning. He gave away the last morsel of food he had in the house yesterday evening, and then lay down on his bed too tired to go to the public stores for more, and having no one to send, for his servant died last week of fever. When they came to him this morning he was dying—of a broken heart, he told them, that he could do no more for his people."

"That's what I complain of—that the best of us are dying of broken hearts instead of drawing together and finding something better to do. If the clergy were heart and soul with us against the Union; if they were more Irish than anything else——"

"They have got to be more Christian than anything else, and how can they counsel such bloodshed as must come before the revolution you are dreaming of can be brought about? I did not mean to excite you to so much anger, Connor dear, by making you look through one of

my windows into Cynthea O'Roone's miserable little worsted-working world. My other windows at least look out towards fresh air and sunshine, and real mirth and forgetfulness."

"English letters, of course."

"Yes; I have been hesitating whether to keep them to myself or not, and I have decided on trying their effect on you first, knowing you have a power of getting out of mortifications that Pelham lacks."

"Hum, I suppose *she* has written to tell you she is engaged. I suspected something of the kind when I saw the thick letter. What fool has she taken up with? One of the Pelham Court fools, I'll engage. Joy go with them. I've other things than love-making to occupy me this year."

"I am glad you can take it so. I am afraid it will go much harder with Pelham; but, Connor, your imagination has jumped too far. It does not amount to an announcement of an engagement. I have only hints, and the most significant don't come from Lesbia herself, but from the gentleman's family. It seems to be Marmaduke; so you see his charity at least is genuine, not a bribe, as you supposed. You must acquit him there."

"Marmaduke! Well, I used to think he was a mule, obstinate enough to get what he wanted; henceforth I write him down an ass."

"An ass for taking what you were dying to get a very little while ago?"

"I did not begin by being in love with Ellen Daly."

"Oh, Con, what a flatterer you are, making believe that you value me above Lesbia and her great fortune."

"Cupid has not a bandage thick enough to hide from me how you two compare together."

"I am glad you are so free of Cupid. If Pelham were the same I should say it was a very good arrangement. Lesbia is kindly welcome to Marmaduke, though the Pelham Court people will never believe I am not secretly mortified."

"The news comes from Pelham Court, then."

"Yes, it has been growing in Mary's and Louisa's letters all the summer, and now it is full blown. The Pelhams spent the spring in London, and began to make much of

Lesbia as soon as she arrived there. Lady Pelham presented her at the last drawing-room. She had some difficulty in persuading Mr. Thornley to think it necessary, but at last he consented, and the letter I had from Lesbia on the occasion was a window into another world indeed. It reached me just when cousin Anne was in the worst of the fever. I carried it about in my pockets for days, thinking I would administer it to Pelham as an anti-love potion, but I never had the heart. There is a dreadful look of heartache in his face always, now. He is different from you, Connor. He feels the misery he sees round him horribly, but he does not believe in the possibility of washing it out in blood. I could not give him a side blow just then. After all, there was nothing really heartless in Lesbia's being pleased with her pearls and her conquests, only it was perhaps a bad time to write about them to us."

"Other conquests besides Marmaduke?"

"Yes, there was a baronet refused."

"I should have thought he would have done better than Marmaduke, having a title to begin with."

"She did not take him, however; and it is possible the Pelhams may be deceiving themselves. Lesbia's letter is certainly very full of 'your cousin Marmaduke,' but there is a sentence at the end about Whitecliffe that I cannot fancy a new lover greatly liking to read."

"Where is she now?"

"On a visit to Pelham Court with her brother and sister. Both my letters of this morning date from Pelham Court, and are full of descriptions of picnics and shooting parties. I won't inflict it all on you, but you must hear one sentence from Mary Pelham's epistle, it is so characteristic—listen. 'I don't know, dearest Ellen, when we have had such a jolly autumn as we are having this year. Since our cousins John Thornley and Lesbia Maynard came to us, it has been quite delightful. Duke said the other day it put him in mind of the time when you all came from Ireland and spent an autumn with us, for we are making just the same excursions to show the country to Lesbia that we made then for your benefit. Lesbia is a dear little thing, and we are all immensely taken with her. I think I told you in my last letter how well she and

Duke get on together; it is quite a joke, in all our little excursions, how those two are invariably found side by side, and how they forget to look at the landscapes we have come to see, they are so absorbed in each other's conversation. I am sure, dear Ellen, that you will not feel hurt at my saying that we sisters think all the better of her for being able to appreciate dear Duke. She never complains of being dull in his company—indeed, she could not well do so, for he is in delightful spirits again now; and we all so enjoy seeing him happy. Mamma and I often say to each other that the events of this year ought to teach us how wrong it is to grieve when disappointments come to good people like Marmaduke; one may be always sure that something much better than what they had wished for is in store for them.' There now, is not that well put? Should you have given Mary Pelham credit for being able to concoct such a pointed sentence?"

"The nasty little spiteful cat! I am right glad to remember that I never lost an opportunity of aggravating her when I was with her. It was time well spent."

"All the letter is not as bad as that sentence; there is a good deal of sympathy squeezed into the crossing, and, as I told you, twenty pounds from Uncle Charles. It will go a great way in buying comforts for the fever-stricken."

"We should not need to be fed by charity if we could keep what belongs to us—keep our own corn and cattle from being carried off to England to pay absentee rents."

"Don't look at them. As you said yourself, we are divided from that food by law-walls. I think you had better draw down the blinds of your famine-tower, and never look from its windows. I can't believe that stealing would be less degrading than begging."

"Call it seizing by right of the sword; and you are a false O'Flaherty if you flinch from it."

"I will tell you a thought I do flinch from, Connor. It is this, that you and I have no right to complain if our friends are 'piping while we are mourning.' It is our own doing; we just drove those away from us who could best have helped us."

"You want to whistle old Duke back, eh! I believe

he'd come, and leave Lesbia for Pelham and me to fight for if you were but to lift your little finger."

"No, no. I was not thinking of anything so personal, but I do often contrast in my mind our present solitude with the help we had last winter. It is not want of money that troubles me most; it is forethought and energy to meet emergencies we fall in, and Bride Thornley's brains were worth ten relief committees. Pelham and I grieve over the mismanagement we see, but single-handed we are not strong enough to set it right. People round us are dying, as Father Peter died this morning, wearied out with the sheer difficulty of getting help, while all the time help is near. I don't believe his heart would have broken if the Thornleys had been at the Castle still, and I can't bear to think that we drove them away."

"Say that I drove them away and you'll speak truth. *You* have nothing to blame yourself for."

"Do you never think that secrets are a burden, Con? Have you no compassion in laying them on me?"

"Not an inch. It is the women's part in a rising. Don't you suppose there are always millions of women's hearts burdened before any great outbreak of patriotism in a prostrate nation can arise? You'll be proud of the trust one day."

"I doubt it. Nothing but harm has come of your secrets and mine hitherto. Connor, I dread telling Pelham about Lesbia because I know he cannot help feeling that but for us she would have remained in Ireland, and perhaps never fallen in with Duke at all. We seemed fated to separate Pelham from all he cares for."

"He had his chance in the winter, and has not half so much to complain of as I, who really was in great favour with that little flirt once upon a time. No, I don't pity him, and I don't regret my own work. Let the consequences be what they may, I shall always plume myself on my presence of mind in tearing up those papers that night. You must acknowledge yourself that the lesson I gave John Thornley was effectual. There were no sneers or ridicule of D'Arcy in his essay on young Ireland's poetry, when it came out at last. I took the *Quarterly* you sent straight to D'Arcy, and we read the review together; and he pronounced it the most generous appreciation of our

powers that a non-sympathiser could possibly give. I felt proud that my promptitude had borne such fruit."

"Did you? but it might have been the other way; now I read on and on in wonder. I certainly did not expect such a generous return to our insult; it weighs me down. I don't know how to bear it. He did not even withdraw his favourable opinion of your poems. He expressed it more fully and respectfully than he had done in his first essay; and the warning words at the end, where the reviewer entreats the gifted young men whose writings he has been analyzing, not to throw away their lives—I thought they seemed to come from his heart—as if a brother had written them to brothers."

"Ah, he looks a little farther ahead than most people, that's all. He sees there's danger in us, and acts on Dan O'Connell's maxim—that a spoonful of treacle draws more flies than a barrel of vinegar. I daresay they make a great deal of John Thornley now at Pelham Court. He is getting a grand reputation as a writer, and it must be a new sensation to the Pelhams to count a literary lion among their kindred."

"He was always a favourite with Uncle Charles. He took his sisters down to Norfolk, but I don't gather from Lesbia's letter that he is staying there still. Would you like to read her letter while I go in to mamma?"

"No, thank you; I'm in no need of an anti-love potion from the future Mrs. Marmaduke—keep it for Pelham."

Ellen left Connor with his arms folded across the top of the gate, to smoke his cigar, and stare across the bog into the dancing heat mist of the glowing August day, while she returned to the house. There was a great deal for her to do there, but her mother was no longer the anxious charge she had been during the past winter and early spring. Mrs. Daly belonged to that class of sufferers—"eaters of their own hearts"—on whom a great and general calamity acts as a sort of tonic, strengthening them and even giving them a fresh hold on life, by drawing them out of themselves, and making them conscious of greater powers of usefulness than they had credited themselves with previously. While the whole air was full of evil tidings, and news of sickness and death came with every hour, Mrs. Daly had left off listening exclusively for an anticipated

note of woe to herself. She could let Pelham go forth now into more real danger than had ever been around him before without counting the minutes until his return. She said to herself that she had given him up, and that act of surrender of the object of her idolatry had opened her heart towards her other children. A few weeks ago Ellen would have dreaded the effect on her mother of such letters as had arrived that morning: now she could count on her feeling no more than a reasonable disappointment at news that removed a possible chance of prosperity from Pelham's horizon.

Mrs. Daly had had the first perusal of Mary Pelham's letter, and had been pondering over its contents during her task of weighing out pounds of rice for distribution, and Ellen guessed where her thoughts had been by the flush on her cheek, and the unusual sparkle of indignation in her eyes. She was angry at what she looked upon as a slight to her children, but she was not utterly overwhelmed, as would have been the case formerly.

"Dear mamma, I have left you too long to this weary work. You are tired," Ellen said.

"No, I am glad to spare you, and for you to be out of doors talking to Connor. What does he say to the Pelham Court news?"

Ellen smiled. "Well do you know, I am afraid I now believe, as I never did before, in there being a grain of reality in his love for Lesbia. He protests that he does not care, and is braving it out. If he had lamented and been sentimental, I should not have minded. I should have known his sorrow was not sincere."

"Poor Connor! You think he is disappointed then, Ellen? I must have been very blind that time at Whitecliffe never to have suspected in the least that both my sons were falling in love with a girl whose name I scarcely took the trouble to learn. When I look back to what she was then, and what I then felt about her, I find it hard to realize that she has had the happiness of all my children in her keeping."

"Only for a time. This morning's news takes her and all the Thornleys quite out of our lives—don't you think so? They will never return to Ireland after Lesbia has married Marmaduke Pelham; Uncle Charles would not

allow it. They will settle at Abbot's Thornley, and the Castle will have to be let or sold to some one else."

"Who would dream of buying or renting it, Ellen?"

"Then, mamma, we will all go back and starve there; we will make it a real Ugolino tower."

"Ellen, I can't smile at such a ghastly joke. You must not be surprised that this morning's news is a blow to me; it kills some of my dearest hopes. I daresay you don't give me credit for caring, and thinking, and planning for you all as much as I do; but, Ellen, I have cherished for years in my heart one dream for your future, and till this morning I always thought it would be realized in the end. The hope arose as long ago as our first visit to Pelham Court on leaving Ireland, when I observed the notice Duke took of you, and thought I saw that you tried to please him."

"My fault, my fault," said Ellen, kneeling down by her mother's side, and hiding her face on her shoulder. "Mother, dear, shall I tell you how it was?—it was *your* heart, not *his*, I was trying to win. I wanted to make you think well of me, and I fancied that if sensible, solid Duke Pelham fell in love with me, it would be as good as a certificate of merit, and would make you believe that your feckless, wild, Irish colleen was worth something after all."

Mrs. Daly did not answer immediately; she was trying to understand how it could have come about that, loving her child as she did she should yet have driven her to such a strange expedient for making herself valued. A sense of her own incapacity to deal with this impulsive love-craving nature made her exclaim at last, almost passionately—

"Ellen, how I wish I had been right, and that you could have loved and married your cousin Marmaduke; it would have been such a safe, sheltered, honourable lot for you. How is such a one as you to struggle with the world? What can you do?"

"Something better than live in a grand house, and all the time secretly look down on my husband," said Ellen raising her head. "Mamma, it would not have been a safe or honourable lot; it would have been death to me to have lived in closest relationship with a person whom at every moment I was despising a little."

"But, Ellen, how could you despise Marmaduke, a sensible, honourable English gentleman whom everybody looks up to?"

"But I should not have been one of the 'everybody,' if I had been his wife. I should have despised him for not being able to feel and see what I can feel and see; for having such a small, dull, colourless soul in the great, strong, cultivated body his friends admire so much. I know it would have been mean in me, almost as mean as if he were to despise me for not being able to walk ten miles in an hour; but if I had put myself into the temptation of being his wife, I am afraid I should have felt so."

"Yes," Mrs. Daly answered slowly, "you are right; there is temptation to mutual contempt when two people closely bound together are so unlike that they cannot appreciate each other's best qualities, but are always requiring each of the other something that cannot be given. Even when there is true love to begin with, the constant criticism (if it is only about trifles) builds up a wall of division that only death throws down. I am glad you will never be Marmaduke's wife."

"And since I disappointed him, I should like to be glad that he has got Lesbia."

"I can only think of Pelham's disappointment."

"I think of Pelham too; but, mamma, had you not rather have him as he is to-day, than as he would have been if he had given up his honest pride, and courted and won Lesbia as you and I think he might have done last spring? He would never have been anything all his life but a dependent on the Thornleys if he had done that. Now he has been thrown on his own resources, and shown through this dark time the courage and power there is in him, and he has won respect from all the neighbourhood that can never be withdrawn again. The poor people who used to be prejudiced against him say that he is a true Daly now."

"Perhaps I don't value that praise as much as you do, Ellen. The prospect of there never being anything for Pelham but a life of struggle and scramble down here is a hard one for me to reconcile myself to."

"I wish there were nothing worse before us, mother. I

wish our horizon were clear towards a life of work anywhere, with only everyday anxieties and privations to meet."

"Don't let me teach you to fear, Ellen; it has been the bane of my life—so great a torment that I sometimes think I suffer least at the moments when my worst fears are realized. In this dark hour let us take the rest of knowing that the darkness is here, that we have not to look for it."

"Or let us look to the dawn. Mamma, did you hear the news about Father Peter?"

"That he is dead, do you mean?"

"Yes, indeed; Biddy O'Rea came early this morning to tell us. The poor old man was feeling very ill on Sunday, it seems. Instead of preaching, as he generally does before mass, he came and stood by the altar, and said three times over a sentence out of the epistle for the day, 'The fashion of this world passeth away,' and then he sat down and buried his face in one of those old cotton pocket-handkerchiefs of his, and cried, and all the people in the little chapel cried with him; but Biddy assured me there was a power of comfort in the tears, for had not Father Peter given the best news he could to them that found the world such a hard place to live in? The misery and the suffering, and the dying of it were only passing fashions; and the true life was to come. He had gone to find it now."

"Cousin Anne loses an affectionate old friend in him. I hope the news won't throw her back in her recovery. Would it not be well for you to go and stay with her to-night, and see how she is?"

"Oh, if I might; if I thought you would not miss me. Pelham promised to be home early, and I would make Connor promise not to stir from the house in case of your wanting him."

"But how would you go to the Hollow?—who would drive you?"

"I could walk; the short cut across the mountains is not too far for me on a calm day like this, and I want to call at a cabin on my way. It's three days since any of the Malachy family have been here, and I fear they may be in great straits for food. The neighbours would not go near them I know, even if they were in the last extremity."

"And I can't bear to think of your visiting them alone in that solitary place among the hills. What could you do for them if you found them dying of fever?"

"I should not be far from help. I could go on to Father Peter's house in the next valley, which is sure to be crowded with visitors to-day. I will set out early and get to Good People's Hollow long before sunset."

Half an hour later, Ellen, with a small basket of provisions on her arm, was climbing a steep sheep walk, that, winding up the side of a grassy mountain, rounded its edge, sloped in more or less precipitous descents to the broad valley that divided the green range of the Joyce hills from the barren Maam Turk mountains.

The cabin, that was the first object of her walk, lay beyond the fertile valley, in a stony ravine, carved by a long dried-up water course in one of the dark sides of the bare limestone hills. It was the rudest possible shelter, built of loose stones, and so crouched amid projections of rock, as to be invisible at a little distance. It was hardly better than a den such as a wild animal might have sought, but it served the purpose of the banned man, hunted out of fellowship by his old comrades, not so much for his crime as for the consequences supposed to have followed upon it. Ellen had sought him out in his horrible solitude once or twice before during this summer on errands of mercy, and she had no fear whatever in venturing herself in a place where hardly any one else in the neighbourhood would have put their feet. There might be sad sights awaiting her there, but she was growing accustomed to these, and had indeed become so far hardened to them, that when she had climbed the steepest bit of the path, and found it necessary to sit down on a stump of dry moss to rest, she could so far put anticipation away, as to be able to rest her eyes and heart, wearied with sad sights, by full enjoyment of the beauty and peace around her.

It was one of the bright, warm, still days of which they had had so few through the summer, that in looking back Ellen thought she could count them all on her fingers. The fine days had made up for their rarity, however, she thought, by having a peculiar beauty of their own such as the fine days of other summers had never hitherto attained

to. It was as if the blue sky and the sun, so seldom seen, rained down a tenderer love and beauty upon the earth to make up for their constant veiling, doing their best to show forth the glory that ever follows on the trace of tears—"the clear shining after rain."

Was it the atmosphere, heavy with moisture, or the rain-drenched earth, spreading its wet bosom to the comforting of the sun, that had the largest share in producing the magic gradations of lovely hues that blended near view and distant horizon into such a wondrous harmony? From her elevated seat, Ellen looked down on a wide-spread landscape of valley, mountain, and lake. Miniature mountains and valleys an eye accustomed to grander scenes might have called them, but all borrowed majesty of form and endless variety of hue from the many-tinted air-veil that draped them around and harmonized the whole into a scene of almost unearthly loveliness. On the heights were still blue tarns held in the hollows of emerald hills; further down lay shimmering sheets of opal-coloured water, shadowed by dark rocks. Sparkling green valleys ran up between the sides of the grey hills, gaining a foothold on their slopes here and there, and climbing up to hang verdant moss-wreaths and flame-coloured lichens round the wild, rough crags. At rare intervals, a clump of trees might be discovered springing in a sheltered hollow, with a farm-house roof, or the white walls of a group of cabins, peeping out between their boughs. On every side countless falls wound their devious ways, bubbling slowly and almost silently through rich moss, or hurrying with much clatter down rocky steeps to their rest in the lakes below. Here was another window opening out from the famine-tower, which Ellen thought it was well to stand at, for a few minutes now and then, and look through.

Through—yes, that was the word—it was there for her to look through. But at what was she to look? How did the mid-day glory on the hills fit in with her day's work? how was it to strengthen her for the sights that would meet her in the valleys below?

As she sat questioning her sad heart, another light than the light of the August sun seemed all at once to be shown to her—a light from a hill in a far-off land gleam-

ing from garments made "whiter than fuller could white them," from a face that, from being marred with a sorrow beyond any man's, became transfigured with glory beyond the glory of the sun. Ah, this was the link she wanted. Here she was having a glimpse of the transfigured face displayed for a moment to give strength and hope; but the sorrowful, marred countenance would look upon her as divinely, in the suffering He had shared and sanctified, in the death over which He was victor, and which He had made now a triumphant gateway to Himself.

A little stream that was slowly welling through the thick moss by her side seemed to take up the refrain of her thoughts and murmur it in low music: "The fashion of this world passeth away." The glory and the beauty of it, the sorrow and the dying of it, passing shows through which His face may be seen summing up all in victory and peace.

It was deep rest to sit on the hill and listen to the rivulet's song, but it must not be indulged in too long. From one of the little ravines into which Ellen looked from her height, came every now and then, as the wind brought it, the sound of a bell tolling. It was being rung in Father Peter's little chapel, among the cluster of low cabins clinging to the foot of that green hill in the far distance; and Ellen could descry little dark spots coming towards the village along different mountain and valley roads. Some service was going on in the chapel to which the country people were flocking; she need not fear a too lonely walk to-day. More directly below her lay the black hollow between the frowning mountain peaks to which she was bound. Its upper slope, in which was built Malachy's cabin of stones, lay in dark shadow even at mid-day, and under a cloudless sky. There was no chance that he or anyone belonging to him would venture himself among the worshippers in the neighbouring valley. The wretched man living there had lost the only other friend beside herself who shared the secret of his retreat, and who compassionated the misery of remorse mingled with baffled longings for vengeance, with which his wild heart had been torn for months past.

The thought of his despair at the news of Father Peter's death, and of his probable great need of help, roused Ellen

at last to take up her basket and begin the descent of the hill. There was some difficult scrambling among slippery, moss-grown crags, and then a long, smooth slope of short thymy grass, fragrant at every step, where sheep and goats were feeding. When she was about half way down this slope, her eye fell on a figure approaching along the road that wound through the valley she was about to cross. At first her thoughts were idly occupied in wondering whether the black speck were lessening or nearing. Was it some one going to or returning from Father Peter's wake? Then, as the distance visibly lessened, a keener interest was awakened. It was not a countryman in a frieze-coat, she was now certain. Neither was the figure Connor's; it was shorter than Connor. It was not Pelham's walk either, yet it was one she recognised. Then Ellen stood quite still for a minute, and knew that her heart was beating more quickly than when she had climbed the steepest part of the hill. The contour of the figure, and even the face was recognizable now. It was John Thornley, whom she had not seen since their departure from Castle Daly in the early summer, when he had taken leave of her with an expression of pained surprise on his face, which told her how much her hasty retreat, and refusal to give the explanation Bride sought, had lowered her in his estimation. She had often said to herself since then that she hoped she would not see him again till some very distant day when their present troubles were all but forgotten, and when the misunderstanding between them could be calmly discussed, and explained without effort. There was no help for it, however, now; he had recognised her, and was hurrying on. They met and shook hands at the foot of the hill. It was just a common place "How do you do?" as if they had seen each other yesterday, followed by inquiries, on John's side, after the health of the other inmates of Eagle's Edge, and then they turned and walked along the road together; but Ellen had seen that it was no recollection of the painful circumstances of their last interview that was in John's face now, but a tremulous, overpowering joy at meeting again, which yearning eyes and trembling lips betrayed, in spite of the carefully-composed manner that would have denied all emotion. A long, awkward silence

followed. Ellen had nearly reached the head of the ravine where Malachy lived before she could think of a sentence with which to break it. Yet she felt she must talk, and find some excuse for dismissing her unexpected companion before she could perform her errand.

"We did not expect to see you here again this year, or at least not so soon," she concluded, vexed with herself to perceive that what she had intended for a commonplace remark had brought a change of countenance, and called up the very look of pained reproach she had been relieved not to see at first.

"I came back," he answered, "because I could not stay away any longer; but I believe it was a letter of Miss O'Flaherty's that gave the final impulse to my movements, and fixed my journey for this particular week."

"She did not ask you to come back?"

"Oh no, the letter was not even addressed to me. Bride had it while we were staying at Pelham Court, and gave it me to read one morning when we rode to the county town to attend a public meeting where your uncle was to speak."

"Lesbia told me of it."

"She would describe the meeting better than I, for I heard very little of the speeches, or rather I should say I listened to them with very unsympathetic ears. I had read Miss O'Flaherty's letter just before I entered the room, and all through the proceedings I imagined myself listening to you contradicting and pleading against the statements the speakers urged. By the time the meeting came to an end I had grown so restless that on reaching Pelham Court I could do nothing else but pack up my clothes and set forth to ascertain what was happening here for myself." The eyes raised to Ellen's face during the concluding sentence of this speech scanned it with keen anxiety, as if the expression written there was what he had come expressly to scrutinise.

"So many people were said to be ill, I feared what I might find," he added slowly, after a pause.

"You know, I suppose, that Cousin Anne has been very ill, and that Father Peter M'Guire died this morning?"

"Yes, I went to the 'Hollow' early, having arrived at Castle Daly late last night. I was on my way to Eagle's

Edge with a message from Miss O'Flaherty to you to beg you to come to her."

They had reached the head of the stony ravine now, and Ellen stood still. "I am actually on my way to the Hollow," she said, "but I have to call at a cabin near here first. I may be detained half an hour. Will not you turn back now, and go on to Eagle's Edge? Mamma and Connor are at home, and will be delighted to see you."

"You send me away! you want to get rid of me when we have only this instant met," John exclaimed in a tone of vexation.

"No, I don't," Ellen answered. "I want to ask you a great many more questions about Lesbia and my cousins, but I must go into that cabin alone."

"We will walk down the ravine together at all events, and I will wait outside while you go in. But where is there a cabin? I see nothing but a heap of loose stones. Surely no one lives in such a desolate place. Are you going to scramble up there?"

"Yes, it is a cabin; the door faces the rock, and there are rude steps cut in the steepest part of the hill. Please don't come any further; there is a sick person inside, who will be distressed by the sight of a stranger."

When Ellen had climbed the steep head of the ravine, and rounded the jutting-out ledge of rock that partly concealed Malachy's rude shieling, she paused to rest for an instant, and looking across the craggy wall into the hollow beneath was relieved to find that her companion had not attempted to follow her even with his eyes. He was standing sentinel at the foot of the rock-stairs she had clambered, with his face towards the opening of the ravine.

His figure was diminished in size by the distance, but Ellen wished him still further away, when she remembered the sight that would meet her eyes as soon as she pushed open the rough door at the end of the path she had entered on. From some dark corner of the rude shed, the gaunt shape of a man would start up at the sound of her foot-step, and lift eyes full of a terrible hunger to her face.

It was now nearly a year since these two—the man she

had left below, and him she was about to visit—had been hunting each other, one with the hope and purpose in his mind of bringing the actors in a great crime to just punishment, the other with a deadly hunger for vengeance in his heart that the pangs of bodily hunger had scarcely had power to tame. Ellen's heart sank in fear at the thought of their discovering each other's neighbourhood, even now; but she thought it better to run this risk than to leave her errand unaccomplished. Malachy's wife and children and old mother shared the shelter of the shieling with him, and had become since the famine objects of almost equal dislike to the neighbours, who believed that a curse rested on the family, and who were capable of leaving them to starve unthought of—though they would not on any temptation have delivered up the man to justice.

The cabin door stood open, and there was no smoke issuing from the aperture; but Ellen was not surprised. The weather was warm, and as it was three days since any member of the household had been to Eagle's Edge to beg for food, it was only too probable that there was nothing in the cabin to cook. She pushed the door a little; it seemed to resist the pressure as if something lay across the threshold, and it was not without considerable effort, and with a dull thud as of some heavy body thrust aside, that it yielded so far as to allow her to squeeze herself inside.

It was almost dark in the inclosure, for though the loosely-fitted stones let air and light through, the upper end of the ravine lay in deep shadow just then, and the eye had to grow accustomed to the dim light for anything to be seen distinctly.

"Molly," Ellen said, softly, "it is I come to bring you food at last. Are you all asleep? Molly! Dennis!" She called twice, and then her eyes beginning to see what was around her, grew large with horror, and a fit of cold shuddering seized her. The place was not empty, but it was very still. Just opposite to her was a figure half-seated on the ground with its back to the wall. A child's form lay motionless across its knees, the head rested on a stone in the wall, and there was light enough through a crevice above to show Ellen that the death-pale, hollow

face, with dropped jaw, and half-closed eyes that looked so strangely without seeing, were those of Malachy's young wife. "Nora," she tried to say, but the word would not come, only a hoarse sob in her throat; then she turned and looked into the dense darkness at the end of the shed where it sloped up towards the mountain side. A heap of dead fern-leaves and moss lay along the floor there, and on it were stretched two other motionless bodies of an old woman and a child.

Ellen forced herself to stoop over them, and in desperation dragged away the tattered shawl that half hid the old woman's face, and putting her hand on her shoulder, shook her gently. "Molly, Molly, wake! I have brought you help." The figure fell back into its settled position again as soon as her hand left it, and Ellen started up horrorstruck again. Her hand had come in contact with the withered cheek, and its touch stung her with cold. She felt she must struggle out into the open air before she fainted, and then, preparing to move, she perceived what the object was that had impeded the opening of the door. It lay almost over her feet; she had stepped on it in entering; the prostrate body of Dennis Malachy, who seemed to have fallen down beside the threshold as he was attempting to leave the shieling, perhaps to seek help in the last extremity of his wife and children, perhaps to escape from the chamber of death. There was something in his attitude less lifeless than in that of the others. Sick and trembling as she was, Ellen could not step over him again without ascertaining whether there might not be a spark of life left. She turned the face, which was towards the floor, upwards, drew it to the opening, and rested the head on the door sill where the air could blow upon it; then, hardly knowing whether she most dreaded to see the eyes remain shut, or that they should open on her with some look of unspeakable pain, such as she could never forget afterwards, she rushed out of the cabin and tottered down the rocky path, stumbling and dragging herself up again, but never pausing till she had reached the spot where John Thornley stood and seized him by the arm.

"Come! come! there are people dying up there. There are dead people up there."

Her voice sounded strange and hoarse to herself, and greatly startled him, as did her pale face and horror-stricken looks.

"You must not go there again. I will go," he said. "I will see what is wanted, and fetch help."

"To stay here alone would be worse, much worse," Ellen answered, recovering her voice and calmness in a degree, now that a living fellow-creature's face was near to be looked at. "Let me go back; there is a man in the cabin up there who has some life in him still, I think; if I go back to him with you, and we can do anything for him, I shall not always have such a great horror of what I have seen."

"How near is help to be had?" John asked, as they were climbing the path, "for I cannot let you stay here if the man you speak of recovers and lingers a while. Some one else must be fetched to watch him."

"It would not be so hard as another watch we had," Ellen said, the scene of her father's death flashing on her memory as she spoke, and with it a shuddering wonder that she should be going to minister to the last moments of the man, to whose thirst for revenge he had fallen a victim, and with John Thornley to aid her. She had been forgetting who it was that was dying during the last moment or two.

John could have knelt down and kissed the stone on which her foot rested at the moment, in gratitude for that *we*; but she was not thinking of him except as a strange coadjutor in the strange task. He would not let her enter the cabin till he had gone in first. When he beckoned her to follow, Dennis Malachy had been lifted from the threshold of the door, and placed on a heap of straw near the wall, with a log of wood under his head. John had opened Ellen's basket, and was attempting to put some drops of brandy between the parched lips. "He is not dead," he said, "but I don't think there is a possibility of saving him; he is so terribly wasted, he must die."

Ellen knelt down on the floor, and began to bathe the temples with water. "He breathes still. I wish you would go down into the village and find a priest, and bring him here. The old woman who is lying dead there did that for papa."

"This is Dennis Malachy then, your father's murderer? I did not know him"

"The cause of his death, but not his murderer," said Ellen, quickly, withdrawing her hand instinctively at the word from the brow she was bathing. "He told me solemnly it was not his hand that sent the bullet."

"You have known where he was ever since?"

"No, only since hunger drove him to betray himself to me. I remembered then that papa forgave. Only he forgave—no one else could; the others hunted Dennis to his death. But he was not always a bad man; I remember him when he was good and gentle, and used to meet us on our walks, and carry us home on his shoulder when we were tired. I don't know whose fault it was that he came to this, but I don't believe that it was all his own."

With the last words she slipped her arm under his head, and raised it a little. The lids that drooped over the half-closed eyes quivered, the breast heaved, and with a sudden spasm of parting strength, the dying man sat half upright, and stared wildly round him. John Thornley involuntarily put up his hand to shade his eyes from the stare fixed on him.

"An orphan's curse might drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But, oh, more terrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye."

The lines came into John's mind, and stayed there, and could not be exorcised for long afterwards. Then the dying man's eyes were turned on Ellen, and the hands that had clutched convulsively were spread out imploringly towards her.

"Miss Eileen, Miss Eileen, save me! don't let me do it or I'll lose me soul. Why did ye bring *him* here, that I might curse him wid me last breath, and lose me soul?"

"You shall not, Dennis," Ellen said, bending over him so as to hide Mr. Thornley's face from his sight. "Look at me, and remember the words I said to you that night, when I told you my father forgave you, and that the Father in heaven forgives us when we forgive our enemies."

"Shure you bade me spare him, and I did your bidding,

and I'm glad. It's all over wid us now, Miss, Eileen. Praise be to God and His blessed Mother! the starving's over, and the pain wid all of us, and I'm going. Why would we any of us live any longer?—dying's a dale aisier—in peace." The head sank back again, the last words were murmured between lips that quivered, and then became convulsed in a strong spasm. There was a long, shuddering gasp, then Mr. Thornley came round and drew Ellen's arm from under the head.

"It is over," he said. "Come away with me; you must not stay here a moment longer; there is nothing more for you to do; I will take care that all is done that is right by these." He glanced round at the corpses. "We shall surely be able to persuade some one from the next village to come up and do what is necessary."

"But are you sure there is nothing more we can do? The children," said Ellen; "the little girl lying by the grandmother in the bed—little Nora—I hardly looked at her."

"But I have looked. Those two must have been dead many hours; it is a terrible sight; you must come away." Almost by force he raised her from her kneeling position on the floor, and lifted her over the threshold into the open air. Then she sat down on a stone by the wayside, and burying her face in her hands gave way to the tears that had been choking her for so long. He stood by watching the bright drops that trickled through her fingers on to the ground, longing for the right and the power to comfort her, and almost hating himself for the excess of feeling that made it impossible to say a word that would not betray too much; and then again for not having courage even in that moment to say all.

She lifted up her head after a long time, and turned to him with one of the appealing confiding looks, free from all self-consciousness, that always touched him so deeply—so much more deeply than any consciousness would have done, even if it had given him more hope.

"Do you think," she said humbly, "that this was at all my fault?"

"Your fault! how could it be? I was thinking that there was no one on earth but yourself who, under the circumstances would have acted towards that man as you have acted."

"But I went away last week to stay with cousin Anne, trusting that Father Peter would look after the Malachys, and you see he was not able."

"In times like these, when there is so much misery around, it will not do to waste strength in regretting what was unavoidable. It must have been a miserable death-in-life they lived up here shunned by every one."

"Cousin Anne offered to take the children, but Nora and Molly would not give them up. They said they would all hold together till the end, and so they have done."

By this time Ellen had risen from the stone, and they proceeded to descend the hill. When they reached the head of the ravine, John Thornley said,

"Which way shall we turn? Shall I take you home and get help from Eagle's Edge, or will you persevere in going to the Hollow?"

"To the Hollow, I think. We are more than half way there, and about half a mile from this place there is a hamlet where I know a great many people are congregated to-day."

The walk was almost a silent one, for it was impossible to talk on any common topic; and the horror of the scene they had left seemed to grow instead of lessen in John's mind as they walked through the smiling green valley in the glorious autumn afternoon; the air, fragrant with the thymy scent of the thousand minute flowers that bordered the road, musical with placid country sounds—sheep-bleatings and cattle-lowings from the hill-sides, and with the plover's shrill cry as the bird skimmed across their path and darted away, rising high in the air and dipping again in search of food on the boggy surface of the valley.

"I cannot get the remembrance of that man's face out of my mind," John began abruptly, when they were near enough to the village to hear the stroke of the little chapel bell that was still tolling. "I am afraid the terrible reproach there was in it when he looked his last on me will haunt me in every miserable or weak moment of my life henceforth. Yet, looking back soberly, as I must try to do, I don't think I ought to blame myself for any part of my conduct to him. I only did what I believed to be my duty."

"It did not look like duty to him, you see, because he had grown up with notions of rights and law very different from yours. He appeared to you only a lawless robber holding on to property that did not belong to him; but in his own mind there were stubborn, blind beliefs in rights that had come down to him through centuries of his ancestors, and these were too much a part of him to be thrown off at any bidding of yours. He could not have explained himself to you or any one, but the conviction that you were the robber and injurer, and not he, was strong in his thoughts and confused all his relations to you. I have often talked over these things with Cousin Anne lately, when we have been trying to account for the terrible crimes this year has witnessed among people whose generosity of nature we believe in, and for the wild projects current now among Connor's friends."

"If I had gone to the appointed meeting that night, and been shot, Dennis would have been looked upon as a hero. These people would not have connected that crime with punishment. Yet I was only acting in your father's interest."

"They did not understand that, because my father was such a careless ruler, and the change was so great and sudden. My dear father blamed himself, you know, and thought that death-shot his due."

After a pause of thought, John took up the conversation again. "I begin to see where the fault lies. A few minutes ago I was saying vehemently to myself that at least I had been guilty of no injustice, yet I felt that the sting of remorse would not strike so deep if I were really blameless. Now I see how it is. I ought never to have come here, knowing so little as I did of the people I had to deal with, having scarcely glanced at the problems that rise up before me now as almost unfathomable. I know what Miss O'Flaherty thought of my presumption. If I had been less self-confident, less contemptuous of other people's doings, less full of system, perhaps—but I dare not look back in that way, the consequences are too terrible. Your father's death, the miserable end of that man and his family—it will not do to look back and trace consequences in cases of such tremendous importance; it would be giving conscience too terrible a power; the burden of life would be too heavy to carry for a day."

"Yes, indeed," said Ellen, "if we had to carry all by ourselves. We should be tempted to put off seeing our own share of responsibility in all the ill that happens, however much worse the suffering might be in the end, when we had to see the truth."

"Don't speak of yourself as if you had any share in the pain to-day has brought to me."

"But I have. I don't think any great wrong or misery can befall without more or less blame belonging to all the lookers-on. It is a circle that spreads out farther than our dull consciences can trace. Here we are in the hamlet I spoke of. That little cottage among the trees half-way up the hill is the priest's house, where you are sure to find plenty of people to-day. I think I will go into the chapel down there. Some service or other is going on now, and I shall perhaps see some one I know who will help us if your errand fails; and I shall rest there while you go up the hill."

John despatched his business more speedily than he expected, and turned his steps towards the little white-washed building that served the villagers for a place of worship. The narrow space was so crowded to-day with people thronging round the different little altars that he had some difficulty in finding Ellen. He saw her at last among a throng of women kneeling in a circle at the end of the chapel, and he made his way up to her. The women drew apart as he approached to make room for him at her side; and almost involuntarily he knelt down a little way behind her. There was preaching going on. He had not come in at the beginning, and could not make out whether any text for the sermon had been given out; but the sentence, "Man does not live by bread alone," was repeated several times by the preacher, and each time a groan of acquiescence burst forth from the pale lips of the famine-stricken people kneeling round, who seemed to hang upon the speaker's words as if they were food indeed. Then the preacher went on to describe in glowing words, and with much metaphor and eloquence the spirit life—nourished by the true bread—into the full enjoyment of which the good priest who had addressed his flock from that spot two days ago had now entered. At another time John might have listened critically—questioning the

wisdom or the utility of such an exercise under such circumstances ; but now kneeling on the mud floor among that sea of pale faces that were gradually losing their ghastliness under the illumination of hope in the Unseen, thus set forth before eyes that in every other quarter beheld only despair, he could not question. Here were needs—depths and breadths and lengths and heights of suffering—which no science or philosophy of his could reach or touch, but which seemed here in these words of childlike faith to find solution swallowed up in yet more unfathomable heights and depths and lengths and breadths of love. At the end of the sermon something was said about the new light which the dawning of that Eternal Day would cast on the perplexities and sufferings and wrongs of our lives. It would be easy, the preacher said, to forgive all wrongs, fancied or real, when all the links that had bound our lives together and to God were made clear. Ellen turned her face, radiant with a tremulous tearful smile towards him at the words and held out her hand. The moment he held it seemed to John Thornley to open the door for him into a new life. It might not be a life of happy human love, but one tending to higher, nobler, more self-sacrificing ends than he had yet known ; he prayed low to himself that it might be. The next moment the blessing was given, there was a movement among the kneelers by the altar, and Ellen rose and they left the place together.

They met Peter Lynch in the throng outside the chapel door who gave Ellen such a gloomy account of his mistress's state of health that she was glad to accept his offer of a seat on the three-wheeled car which had brought him to the village, and so hasten her arrival at the Hollow.

John Thornley after placing her in the car shook hands with her in silence. It did not seem necessary for him to say, "We shall meet to-morrow." That hand-clasp in the chapel seemed just then to have made him independent of future meetings or partings, and to have given him a spiritual hold on her presence so firm that no distance of space nor spite of circumstance could ever oblige him to let it go again. Far or near, dear to her or indifferent, he believed he should live from henceforth in its light.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Good Heaven! what sorrows gloomed that parting day
That called them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers and fondly looked their last,
And looked a long farewell; and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main,
And shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep."

DESERTED VILLAGE.

"YES, he was right; I have made mistakes. I would not believe anything contrary to my hopes. I chose to forget the other laws besides my own that were ruling my little kingdom. There was pride and presumption, as well as want of foresight, in my plans."

"But Mr. Thornley says now that it was he who was in the wrong—he does indeed, Cousin Anne. He accuses himself of presumption for differing from you; and I liked him for saying that, and believed in him as I had never done before."

"Well, the purging is severe enough; we ought to come out of it emptied of old, self-glorifying illusions at all events."

Anne O'Flaherty, who, in the energy of her first speech, had partly raised herself from her sofa, sank back weary and faint at these words, and Ellen came near to bathe her forehead, and make her smell a flagon of scent, concocted, after one of her own recipes, from Good People's Hollow wild flowers in happier days.

She was slowly recovering from a bad attack of the famine fever. "But was it recovery, or only passing into another stage of illness?" Ellen sadly asked herself, when, having done what she could to revive her patient, she resumed her seat by her side, and looked lovingly at the changed face. There was something on it more hopeless than traces of illness; there was a lifeless droop of the mouth and eyes, a weight of weariness and pain on the brows ("heart-break") Peter Lynch called it, which Ellen had first noticed there before the fever attacked her, on her return from Galway, where she had accompanied the first

band of emigrants from her valley, and seen them embark in the ship that was to take them to America.

Another party was shortly to follow, as might be gathered from the heaps of bundles of clothing ticketed with names that filled the tables, and were piled up against the walls of the turret room, to the exclusion of the little works of art that had been stored there in old times. Ellen's fingers had been busy on the component parts of another bundle when the conversation began; and Anne had only lately let a flannel garment fall to the ground, because her weak fingers could not hold it. In a few minutes Ellen took up her work, and with the busy movement of her needle, resumed the talk, beginning, without preface, on the subject that she knew her patient's thoughts were at work upon.

"I think the letters from America that arrived last night are quite as encouraging as we had any right to expect. To be sure, the two old O'Shanes, and Widow Joyce, and pretty little Katty Malony, died on the voyage; but a great many more of them would have died of the fever if they had stayed here, and the rest of the party seem to have landed in excellent spirits and hopes. Don't you like Mary Burke's description of America—'A blessed land that God has made on purpose for the poor.'"

"I ought to feel more cheered than I do; but I am like a foolish old hen-mother, whose brood has strayed beyond her power to cluck them back to her. Those people, whose forefathers lived and died on this little nook of earth, under my forefathers' protection, and whose hearts seemed bound to the soil that nourished them, I thought that God had given them into my hands to rule and keep guard over; and I want to be quite sure that it is His decree, and not my own misreading of it, that compels me to open my hand and let them stray away."

"Mr. Thornley has no doubt that emigration is the right remedy for the present misery. He says that it offers a much better life to those who go away, and that being rid of what he calls the surplus population will immensely improve the condition of those who stay."

"Yes. I understand the reason of that, if men or nations lived by bread alone; but they don't, or at least we Irish people don't. There is no saying what is the surplus

population in a race where hearts are bound to hearts so intimately, that distance can stretch but never break the links. I don't believe the emigration will stop at just those people going who are not wanted here. Soon there will be thousands of voices calling from the other side of the sea, 'Come over to us,' and the mothers, and the brothers, and the lovers left at home will rise and go, and in their turn swell the chorus of invitation till there is no one left to hear it—till our valleys and our hill-sides are empty or inhabited by aliens. I do not say that a better state of things might not arise—for England; but I am an Irishwoman; I cannot help having some qualms at assisting at what I fear may be our nation's death throes."

"Connor would rejoice if he heard you speak in this fashion, Cousin Anne. He would claim you as one of his party at once. His friends are very angry about the emigration, and say, as you do, that now the tide has set in nothing will stop it but a revolution that restores independence to Ireland."

"As I don't say. You know I have no sympathy with that baseless dream of Connor's party, though I may take the same view they do of what this crisis is for Ireland."

"Connor says this time is just the last possible opportunity for Ireland to stand up and claim her independence as a united nation, for that if her people allow themselves to be drawn or driven away from their native soil, the old links between rich and poor will be broken for ever; and that when the peasantry come back, as he believes they will, and claim the land, it will not be so much as Irishmen against Englishmen, as poor against rich."

"That is looking further ahead than I should have credited Connor with disposition to do."

"His opinions are a good deal formed by his friend D'Arcy O'Donnell."

"Then I suspect it was that same D'Arcy O'Donnell who did me the dis-service of sending me a newspaper, with a column of warning and indignation in it against the promoters of emigration. I found it on my table the evening I got back from Galway, and read it to the echo in my head of my poor exiles' farewell sobs and groans, and all through my illness sentences from it were haunting me. It is there in the third pigeon-hole of my desk, still

in the wrapper in which it came. I kept that to show the direction to Connor, and take his opinion as to who had troubled himself to launch it at me."

Ellen drew the newspaper from its hiding-place, and unwound the cover. "I will take it to Con; but I think I can pronounce on these curves and dashes—they are D'Arcy O'Donnell's; Connor employs me in copying papers of his often enough for me to know his handwriting by heart. Oh, look, here is something written on the inside of the cover; it is an old MS. sheet—part of a poem. I suppose there is no harm in making it out, for I daresay it has been printed by this time."

"Read it aloud to me; I am curious."

"I can't quite read it all. I think it is a rough copy. The title is—'A Mother's Call':—

"Come back, sons over the sea!

Strong limbs I bore,

Ye are mine still!

Do you rise, do you move to me?

Do you hear, there, across the tossing brine,

Sons!—for the great seas swell—

I smell the breath of them, I hear the roar of them

Lapping up to the shore,

Lashing the rock—furies!

What do they come for?

Sires of yours—yearsfull agonies—

Home with a wild lament,

Seas, is it this you bear?

No. But the times that come,

And the thunders I hear,

And the rent wide apart in *her* garment

That covered us, blinded us, wound us—

Chains ground that bound us,

That gyved us—sword that drank at our heart!

Leap to the rock, waves!

Leap to the land, sons, O braves!

Over graves, upon blood-trodden graves

Plant your feet!

Come times, God-revenge,

Slow, sure, complete!"

"You don't make any remark upon it, Cousin Anne."

"I am too unhappy. I was remembering how your father told me one day that I must not expect any good result to follow my poor efforts here, because the ground was so full of dragons' teeth sown in the old, unjust, revengeful times, that there was no room for good grain to grow till all the harvests of evil had been reaped. It

does bring a feeling of despair when one sees that the only hope our patriots are putting before themselves is the opportunity to begin sowing more dragons' teeth."

"Yet when oppressed nations rise and right themselves the world is glad. It is not sowing dragons' teeth if they succeed."

"That depends on the spirit which prompts and carries out the rising. I dread the word 'revenge' for us Irish. Such dark deeds have been done on our side, too, that I have no faith in good coming to us, till we have risen to the heights of repentance and forgiveness."

"I wish D'Arcy O'Donnell could come and talk to you. Do you know, Anne, he was in this neighbourhood in the spring, and Connor wanted to bring him to you; but he refused, partly because he thought acquaintance with such a rebel as he would be distasteful to you, and partly because he has always kept aloof from his relations on our side—not caring to know people who, as he thinks, were hard on his mother long ago. He accepted Connor and me to cousinship because we could have had nothing to do with that last-generation quarrel."

"Nor had I; but you see it's the same spirit in everything. We sow dragons' teeth in our family relationships and reap them to the last grain. Do you happen to know the young man's address? I should like to write and make overtures of peace. I suspect he is very poor in friends older than himself."

"I know he is; do write to him, Anne, and make him come down and stay with you here. He would listen to you, if he would to anyone; and that would be good for Connor. He is in Dublin now. See, I have put his address under his verses on the cover, that you mayn't forget it."

"How still the valley is to-day!" Ellen said, after a little pause. "I suppose it's because the school-house and work-rooms are empty, and so many people gone; but the place is not like itself with no buzzing and singing, and no red cloaks to be seen in the melancholy little bare gardens or on the hill-sides."

"Peter has given strict orders that none of the people who start for America to-morrow are to come to the lodge to wish me good-bye. I am afraid he has held out a

delusive hope that, if I am left in peace to-day, I shall be strong enough to-morrow to go with them as far as Galway and see them on board. But I must not put myself in the way of another such scene as that last parting on shipboard. I wish some less gloomy person than Peter Lynch were going with them—some one who would bring a cheerful account back."

"Mr. Thornley?"

"Ah, that's a good idea; if he comes in to-day I will ask him. He would manage for the emigrants better than Peter Lynch, and talk them into good spirits."

"It would be easy enough for him; he has not the least idea what parting means to Good People's Hollow exiles. It is only mountaineers who ever have *mal du pays*. I don't think anything could make me go; the more miserable the country is the more I feel bound to cling to it; and I think I should be very angry with anyone who tried to draw my affections away from it just now. I should so hate myself if I felt them going."

"But you would be wrong. I am afraid Connor's talk is unwholesome for you."

"I don't sympathize in his hopes, but I feel bound to stand by him when he is putting himself into danger for what, rightly or wrongly, he believes to be the good of the country. I should be very jealous of yielding to any influence that would be likely to draw us apart just now. I should feel it treachery to Connor."

"If a stronger influence than his came, you would have to follow it."

"But it shall not come. There are women in Ireland now who are caring for nothing but 'the country' and the men who still hope for her. I can emulate them."

"Take care not to fancy antagonism where it does not exist. I am very much afraid of that for you, dear."

"There are other things that I am much more afraid of for myself; but I have let you talk too long; your cheeks are quite flushed, and you look so weary. We will not speak another word till I have finished this petticoat. I daresay it will be treasured and handed down as a sacred relic, this last piece of homespun Good People's Hollow flannel its possessor will ever own."

In alternate long silences and snatches of talk the

morning in the turret-room wore away. Peter Lynch, with a face of concentrated gloom, looked in now and then for orders. The breaking up of the kingdom was almost as deadly a blow to him as to his beloved mistress. Murdock Malachy limped in, to carry off the bundles of gifts for the emigrants as they were made up; and, directed by Ellen, the little housemaids came backwards and forwards, from store-closet to cellar, bringing miscellaneous contributions to the bundles, which varied in value from shell boxes and pin-cushions of Anne's manufacture on past winter evenings, and bottles of cordial waters, to homespun cloaks and blankets. Anne portioned out these treasures with such a liberal hand, that the house seemed to be in danger of being stripped to its walls. "They must have a little overplus," she said, as excuse for herself; "they will be packed in the emigrant ship with people sent from the workhouses with hardly more belongings than slaves in a slave-ship; and they would not feel they were taking the Good People's Hollow luck with them, if they had nothing to be hospitable with."

In the afternoon there was a lull in the business of packing. Anne, utterly worn out, dropped into a heavy sleep on the sofa, and Ellen drew her seat into the depths of the wide window-recess to look out over the valley. Then she perceived, what the stillness out of doors had prevented her suspecting before, that the little garden was crowded with people, many of them on their knees. They looked as if they had been waiting long; some partially hidden by the bushes in the garden, some crouched down behind the projecting sides of the window, out of sight, but close enough to hear the sound of voices within. Was it to catch a tone or two of Anne's voice for the last time they had come? Murdock Malachy put his head in at the turret-room door, and seeing Anne asleep closed it softly. A moment after there seemed to have been some signal given without, for the crouchers under the shrubs and in the shadows of the window projections rose up by twos and threes, and approached the front of the window till they commanded a near view of the sofa and of Anne's face, turned so as to let the evening air refresh her cheeks. Then most of them fell on their knees again, and gazed

silently. Ellen drew back not to impede their view, and soon, to save them from the contagion of her own sympathetic grief, so moving was the sight of those gazing faces, puckered into grotesque contortions in order to keep down the sobs that would have disturbed the sleeper, or the tears that would have hindered the last yearning look.

Whole families knelt together—old men and women, who had coaxed Anne O'Flaherty to ask favours for them of her father, when her lisped requests were sure to be granted, and their grandchildren, who had come to her with their lisped petitions a month or two ago. Some took one look only, and then buried their faces in their hands, and rocked themselves backwards and forwards, shaken with noiseless sobs; others knelt rigid, and looked to the last second allowed them, with wide-opened eyes, and pale, drawn faces, down which the tears trickled slowly and unheeded.

"As the souls that are let out of Purgatory on All Souls' Day, and have to go back at night, look at the Blessed Virgin through the windows of heaven," Peter Lynch whispered to Ellen, after he had signalled to the last party to rise and go; and coming up close to the low window, crossed his arms on the sill, and condescended to explain the scene to Ellen, and excuse himself for the sanction he had given to this farewell scene, which might dangerously have agitated his mistress had she awakened in the midst of it.

"*She*," he said, nodding his head towards Anne, "believed me when I told her they would go off to-morrow without a last look at her; but sorrow a one of 'em would have moved. We'd have had a riot over it, and the ship would have sailed without 'em. So I called them together and made a bargain. 'Three minutes for each set of you,' I said, 'as many as can kneel by the window, if she fall asleep; and when I lift up my finger you're to get up and go.' And some of them have been there since morning waiting for the chance, and there is not one of them but will go away with an aiser heart for having had it."

Peter's head here disappeared suddenly, for Miss O'Flaherty moved on the sofa and opened her eyes, and Ellen rose and bent over her.

"I have had such a strangely vivid dream," she said.

sitting up with an eager, refreshed look on her face. "I thought I was dead already, and lying on an open bier in my grave. It was a dark narrow space where I was lying, but at one end there was a door, opening on a well-lighted staircase, which, in my dream, I thought led up to heaven. I wanted to get up and go to the staircase, but I found myself unable to rise—there seemed to be a great weight just over my heart pressing me down. Then I looked up, and through the roof of my grave I saw a crowd of people standing round it, and their tears trickled through the turf and fell on me like lumps of lead and weighed me down. Then I thought I heard voices calling me from the top of the stairs to come up, and one voice said, 'Why don't you pick up the tears and bring them with you to Me?' And at the sound of that voice I seemed to have strength to rise; and I began to gather up the tears, and as I did so bright figures trooped down the stairs and took them out of my hand. I expected to see the angels return by the way they came, but instead of that they rose up through the roof of the grave, and took the weeping people by the hand and led them away. I looked after them, and saw that the bare, parched-up ground on which they stood became verdant under their feet, and on every side waved with grass and flowers and ripe corn. You were the last left by the grave, and I was wondering what would happen to you, when I heard a sound of horse-hoofs coming down the road, and immediately the scenery of the dream faded, and I thought only of seeing your father ride up to this door, as he has done hundreds of times to bring you home when you have been spending the day with me. Don't I hear the sound still?"

"Yes," said Ellen; "it must have been that sound awoke you. There is some one crossing the bridge: it is Mr. Thornley. I wish he had not appeared just now. I wish you had finished your dream, and seen papa come for me."

"We must be patient: a great many messengers come to us before the last. I am glad it is Mr. Thornley; he is much better to me than the end of my dream, for he will help us through the rest of our day's work, and satisfy me about the start to-morrow. I can't depend on Peter's judgment quite as securely as I used to do. I have

noticed a change in him since my illness. His head is not what it used to be."

"Or, rather, Miss O'Flaherty's strength is failing: it's just that," Ellen remarked to John Thornley. "She was the mainspring of the life here, though she always contrived to fix her suggestions on other people, and fancy the credit of every success due to them. Peter Lynch was her Frankenstein-monster, whom she had electrified with activity herself, and of whom she afterwards stood in awe. It is sad to see how bewildered he is, poor fellow, now that the source of all his energy and importance begins to fail him."

"Yes, indeed. It almost took away my breath this afternoon to find the great Peter Lynch coming to me for directions."

It was after two or three hours of hard work, when the day was all but ended, that Ellen and John Thornley found time for even as much conversation as this. John had had half an hour's private interview with Miss O'Flaherty, and since then had been actively engaged in securing that her arrangements for the departure of the party of emigrants on the next morning should be properly carried out, while Ellen busied herself with minor details, or in carrying news to Anne of what was going on out of doors. John had insinuated that this last observance had far better be omitted, since the hearing of occupation she had no longer strength to share was a needless strain on Anne's endurance; but Ellen could not bring herself to acquiesce in such a startling novelty as that of any undertaking being brought to a conclusion in Good People's Hollow without the mistress's participation in every step of its progress. By this time the last package of goods had been piled on to the great waggon that was to start as soon as the moon had risen, the last head of a family had been spoken with and duly instructed in the part he was to act next day, Peter Lynch had gone off to bed, and the entrance-hall, that had been more or less crowded with people and baggage for the last few hours, was emptied of all its occupants but John and Ellen. The front door stood wide open, and the freshness and peace without were tempting.

"Miss O'Flaherty said you had better go out for a walk

before it was quite dark—that it would do you good,” John suggested.

“I will go as far as the bridge,” Ellen said, “and then if I am wanted in the house they can call me back.”

The moon would not rise for another hour, and the sunset lights had faded even from the tops of the hills. A soft pearly twilight lay evenly over the valley and the mountains, and the colourless river rushed in dark swirls and eddies round the arches of the bridge. Ellen folded her arms on the parapet, and looked down into it.

“I am glad of the sound,” she said. “It is something definite to listen to. The stillness hurt me, for I fancied it full of sobs and sighs. There are so many people weeping in the valley to-night.”

Then she told her companion about the scene at the turret-window while Anne was asleep. John listened, looking into her eager, agitated face like one in a dream. The words at least were dreamlike, the face that looked appealingly into his for sympathy—the sum total of interest in the world for him. A few months ago, it would have given him extreme pleasure that she should confide anything to him that troubled her; but now the contrast between her state of feeling and his own struck him with a deadly chill. He had quite made up his mind that this twilight half-hour should decide his fate. He could not bear again to leave her to suffer alone all the trouble he saw before her, and there seemed no reason to wait longer before he spoke to her of his love; for he believed, in his new-found humility, that nothing but the overpowering strength of his affection could win back hers; to show it her fully was the only chance of awakening ever so faint a response. And now all these eager words poured out before him, with so little thought of himself in them, seemed to him as he listened to swell into a river of sound, sweeping wider and wider every minute between them—so wide, that the strong cry from his heart to her to come to him could only reach her thin and poor, as words spoken at a great distance.

“I don’t believe you care in the least for what I am telling you,” Ellen said at last reproachfully, when a pause in her narrative came, to which he made no response. “I thought you would have been a little interested at least.”

You must have been, if you had seen for yourself what I saw."

Then John turned away from her and covered his face with his hands. He had always thought himself a resolute man who had borne and could bear a great deal of pain without shrinking, but the immense disappointment that the next moment might bring seemed just then too bitter a downfall to be risked at once. Should he even now abandon his purpose and give himself a little longer time to hope? For a moment or two he remained in silent struggle with himself.

There was a surprised expression on Ellen's face, when, pale and resolute, he turned back to her again. "I beg your pardon," she began softly, "I see you did care very much."

"No," John answered, "I was not even listening to what you said. You won't be able to forgive me unless I can make you understand how full my heart is of another thought. I dare not call it a hope."

"Can we have hopes for ourselves just now?" Ellen interrupted quickly.

"Only of one kind. Yes, let me go on; if a hope is more to us than life and death, we can have it even while we are standing between the living and the dead. Whatever was happening to ourselves and other people—if the world were crumbling round us, and you and I were left alone, I should still wish as earnestly as I do now to tell you that I love you, and I should hope as I do now that you might find some little help or comfort in knowing of my love."

There was a moment's silence, and as Ellen did not turn away, but fell into her former position, leaning against the wall of the bridge and looking up at him, John took courage and went on.

"There—the word is said; it has been on my tongue a hundred times when I have been with you. It is a poor word for the feeling that has been in my heart ever since the first moment I saw you. I can't make you understand that. I know I have no words: people like me, who habitually hide their feelings, find themselves spellbound when they would give their lives to be able to speak out. Perhaps years of loving deeds might show you something of it. Leave to render them to you is what I ask. I

should not have spoken so soon if you had been happy ; but as it is, I think it better to speak for the chance that the knowledge of my love may help you through this dark time, even if it cannot for a long while to come win back yours."

Ellen listened to the end, and then let her face drop between her hands.

"Will not you answer me at all?" John said. "Must I say to you as you did to me?—Don't you care at all for what I am telling you?"

Then she lifted up a tear-wet face.

"I am so sorry, I am so sorry. How could you think that knowing that would help me?"

"Don't be so very hard on me as to say that it would not help at all—that you utterly reject what I offer."

"I don't mean to be ungrateful."

"Gratitude has nothing to do with it. I can bear anything better than that word from you. It is not gratitude I want from you."

"And so, you see, I can never give anything you care for in return for all you have done for mamma and the boys, and for forgiving me, and going on caring for me, after that time when you must have thought I behaved so ill. You must really let me go on being grateful to you for that, for it touches me more than all your other benefits, though I know quite well how much you have done for us all."

"That's nothing ; if it were, one kind word, one hopeful word from you, would overpay a millionfold."

"It is your saying that, makes me so very unhappy."

"I don't ask for it now, only for leave to wait on, in hope, for years, till you can give it."

"It would be no use. Years will only make it more impossible for me to give you what you want. We have to go different ways. Don't you see that it is hard enough for me to have my heart torn between Pelham and Connor, who are both wanting me to sympathize with them on different sides, dragging me different ways? If I loved you,—but I don't—oh! I could not, I could not. Forgive me for being so decided. I don't mean to give you pain indeed, but the thought is dreadful to me."

"Every answer but one must give me pain, and that one you say you cannot give."

"I can't indeed ; it is quite, quite impossible."

"Then don't let us say any more about it."

He turned, and walked slowly to the house, and Ellen followed a few paces behind ; but when they had nearly reached the open door, she hurried forward, and, coming up to him, touched his arm.

"I am afraid I have vexed you more than I need. I ought not to have been so vehement ; forgive me for that, please ?"

"No," John said deliberately, after a pause of thought ; "I don't forgive you for that, I thank you. I believe you might have said it in a way that would have given me yet more pain. I can't take it all in yet, but I believe the energy with which you have refused me will save me from absolute despair. I think there must have been some pity in your heart, something pleading for me, however faintly, or you would have been less vehement. I shall not quite despair."

"Indeed you had better ; but we are friends. When we knelt in the chapel yesterday, and I felt that you had forgiven me for my conduct about that essay, I was so glad. Let us be friends."

"No, we are not friends. I am your lover. There is no use in calling things by false names. I am the more sorry for your determination against me, because I promised my sister to return immediately to England, if I found I could not be of the use to you I hoped to be. And next to you, I owe most to her."

"Your sister will be glad to get you back, and thank me."

"She loves me too sincerely, and understands too well what the disappointment of my hope will be to me, not to be bitterly sorry. I could tell her what it was to me in better words than I told you. Will you read a letter she sent by me ? She wished me to give it you, whatever was the result of my speaking."

"If you like I will."

"Of course I don't expect it to influence you in any way. I only want you to know how you are thought of, and what friends you might summon to your side in a moment if you wanted them."

Ellen ran up stairs when they entered the house, and

John turned into the turret-room, where Anne was still lying on the sofa by the turret-window. She carefully avoided looking at him as he entered, but he went straight up to her sofa, and stood before her.

"You were right," he said, slowly; "it was no use. Yet I am not sorry she knows."

Anne held out her hand to him. "Well, I suppose there is nothing more to be said, except that I am disappointed. A year or two ago, when I did not really know you, how very much surprised I should have felt at myself for saying that."

"Of course, you understand that I should not have asked her if circumstances had been with me as they were a year or two ago—if I could not have offered her such a home as her father would have thought fit for her."

"Circumstances—I was not thinking of circumstances, but of the change in my feelings towards you. I hope you did not say anything of the kind to Ellen."

"No; but why?"

"I should have despaired of your ever understanding each other, if you were capable of making such a mistake as to suppose that you could tempt her from starving Ireland by talking to her of a comfortable English home."

"There is one thing I should like to ask you. Do you suppose—have you any reason to think—that I have a rival?"

"Only the 'dark little Rose,' of whom Murdock is singing out there, and the wrongs of its people that fill her heart to the exclusion of anything unconnected with them."

"Unconnected with them!—yes, I understand. If I had chanced to be a rebel—if I had written mischievous incendiary verses, she would not have disconnected me from all that interests her. She would have believed in me then; she would have thought more of that than of all."

The sound of Ellen's approaching step stopped the complaint, and to afford himself a semblance of occupation and an excuse for keeping his face concealed, John snatched up from the floor the sheet of paper written with D'Arcy O'Donnell's verses, and signed with his name in Ellen's handwriting; and for the quarter of an hour that

elapsed before Anne and Ellen retired to bed, he sat by the sofa reading and re-reading the poem, with as dark and bitter thoughts in his heart as the poet in his angriest moments had ever desired to evoke in an English bosom.

Anne had a restless night, and during the early part of it Ellen sat by her side, to be at hand to satisfy her when any anxiety about to-morrow's arrangements, or sudden recollection of something omitted that ought to have been done, flashed into her over-active mind. It was while she was dropping asleep at last that Ellen opened Bride's letter and read it by the flickering light of the night-lamp, glad that Bride's clear bold writing made it possible to decipher every word.

"I do not put any formal beginning to my letter," she read, "because I do not yet know whether the person who will read it is the woman in the world I congratulate most heartily, or her I feel most sorry for. You will know when you read. I do not expect you will rejoice as I shall rejoice for you; and certainly you will not grieve as I shall grieve for you, because you don't know yet, as I do, what the heart is worth that you have either accepted or thrown away. It is not exactly about that I want to write to you. I write because whatever happens I should like you to know that I send my warmest wishes across the sea with John, for his success in winning you to be his wife; and if you ever come to understand what he has been to me, since at a very early age the troubles of life began for us both, you will know what an amount of admiration and love for you that wish implies. I will be candid, and tell you at once, that this affection does not spring from any knowledge I have of yourself, but from the reflection in John of what his love for you has done for him. Till this last year I used to think that he could not be better or more than he was; but I have now seen that loving you has made him much more. It has been like the sun, bringing out the rich and delicate shades of character that had been concealed under the frosts of our old life. I believe now that people don't grow up and get to be all they might be, till the deepest and strongest love of which they are capable is called out; and that is what has happened to him since he has seen you. For being that to him whose good is my nearest care, I thank you,

whatever else happens, and shall thank you always. If you love my brother, and are generous enough to be at all sorry for me, for losing the most intimate place in his companionship, I say to you heartily, never mind; it is better with me too now than when I thought I had it secure. The opposite roads of getting and giving up lead to the same ends with those whose feet God sets in them. Don't answer this letter unless you can write yourself at the end, what in hope I venture to sign myself—'Your sister, Bride Thornley.'"

A movement in the bed made Ellen look up as she reached the end of the page. Anne had started up in bed, wide awake from her uneasy doze, and looked so alert and ready for confidence that Ellen could not resist the temptation to light a candle and give her Bride's letter to read.

"It seems a great pity to drive such people away from us. Don't you think so?" Anne remarked, as she handed the paper back to Ellen kneeling by her bed.

"Oh, Anne, don't; don't be against me."

"*Against* you, dearest?"

"Yes. When a thing can't possibly be, what is the use of looking back to it, and reproaching oneself?"

"If you don't love him, of course it cannot be; but, Ellen, I must tell you this now, however angry you are. Once or twice this summer you have said, or left unsaid, little things that disposed me to think that you did love Mr. Thornley."

"But you must have been mistaken; and Anne, even if I did—mind, I am not confessing it—but even if I did love him, it would still be impossible for me to do as he asks. So many obstacles rise in the way that I have not the heart to trample down—promises to Connor, old recollections of painful scenes in my childhood, old jealousies over my father when I thought the English half of the family looked down on him. It would be with half a heart I should come to an English lover; and the half I had turned my back upon would be so indignant and so sore. For Mr. Thornley's sake, as well as my own, I must not do it."

"Not in this mood, certainly."

"All the time he was talking, and since, a verse of one

of Sullivan's poems, which Connor is always quoting, would come into my mind and ring like a warning in my head—

‘A separate race, distinct, apart,
And so till life itself shall end ;
The English and the Irish heart
No human power can fuse or blend.

I am afraid I should always suspect him of looking down on me for being an Irishwoman.”

“Give me Miss Thornley's letter then. I shall take it quite away, or some day, when you are as old as I am, you might read it over again, and take its generosity very bitterly to heart, contrasting it with your own suspicion and prejudice. I did not know that your mind was so full of dragon seeds, or that you had such baneful harvests to reap still, my poor child.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“Let us strike hands as hearty friends !
No more, no less ; and friendship's good ;
Only don't keep in view ulterior ends
And points not understood
In open treaty. Rise above
Quibbles and shuffling off and on ;
Here's friendship for you if you like ; but love,—
No, thank you, John.”

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

“BRIDE, dear, you won't very much mind the trouble of taking Mrs. Joseph Maynard out shopping this morning, will you ? She has set her heart on going to some sale in the Tottenham Court Road, and I have ordered the carriage at twelve ; and you had better take your purse with you, for she is sure to forget hers, and want to buy lots of little things. And oh, by the way, there's Johnnie and Bobbie and Wattie ; could you drop them at the Polytechnic on your way, and call for them some time in the afternoon, when you think they will be tired ? Something must be invented for them to do this morning, and I really don't think I dare leave them to plague John again.”

“So your hospitality has arrived at the vicarious stage already, Lesbia, has it ?” John himself remarked from the

end of the drawing-room he had just entered with his hands full of letters. "It is sooner than I expected. I gave you an entire fortnight for the glory of patronizing your old tyrants to outweigh the trouble of entertaining them, and here at the end of ten days you are rolling the burden on Bride's shoulders, who has no old grudges to balance it with."

Lesbia, who was standing before Bride's writing-table attired in a riding habit, and with the most becoming possible little feathered hat on her head, turned round quickly—"Now, John, the Maynards have been here three weeks at least, and I am sure if you were not so absent you would have seen how I have devoted myself to them—giving up two operas and one singing lesson, and playing at draughts with Dr. Maynard nearly every evening."

"Ah, yes, while the novelty of dazzling them and consciously heaping coals of fire on their miserable heads lasted, I allow you played your part to perfection; but I don't count the week while Dr. Maynard stayed, for I observed you devoted yourself solely and singly to his subjugation, and there you were simply following your instincts and annexing another province to your conquered territory in the Pays-des-tendres. That does not count."

"Dr. Maynard, indeed!"

"Well, I know he is a not a novelty; but he is a man, and *not* a brother, and therefore in a degree worth pleasing. I have no doubt you had made inroads on his heart even in your Cinderella days, and gained little occasional victories from the cinder-heap; but that must have made the pleasure of walking over the ground fully armed all the greater."

"I can't think what you mean, John. I wish you were not so fond of puzzling me. Whenever I want you go anywhere with me, in the morning, you say you are busy, yet you can always find time to come into the drawing-room and say disagreeable things."

"That is to countenance you, Babette, in making Bride *do* disagreeable things. If I did not set you an encouraging example of unamiability, I don't see how you could answer it to your conscience to inflict the Maynards upon her for a whole day, after asking them here yourself, and promising solemnly to be answerable for their entertainment."

"Never mind, John," said Bride, looking up from a letter she was sealing, and nodding cheerfully, "I am really very glad to take my share. I approved of Lesbia's sending an invitation to our cousins this spring, so I ought to be ready to give up a little time to their amusement; and I am not arrived at such a pitch of self-indulgence as to consider it a great hardship to sit in an easy carriage for an hour or so while other people make bargains. I shall keep clear of that part of the business by taking a book with me."

"Oh dear, I'm afraid that will only half satisfy Mrs. Maynard," cried Lesbia; "she will want you to look on and advise, and buy, as a present to herself or one of the children, everything she particularly admires and says she cannot afford to pay for. That is what I had to do when I took her out shopping last week."

"You shall have all the popularity such admirable behaviour as a shopping companion deserves, then," said Bride, laughing; "I cannot undertake to imitate it. I have other ways of spending my money. Mrs. Maynard will console herself by remarking a little oftener than usual, this evening, how singularly good for you was your bringing-up at Whitecliffe, and how much more amiable and agreeable than the rest of your family you became under her care."

"I can't help their flattering me," said Lesbia, pouting a little; "but of course I know that whenever anybody says anything at all complimentary to me, you and John only laugh at it."

"My dear, we would not if we could possibly help it," said John, stooping down and kissing the pretty flushed cheek. "If you will only manage to pick up admirers who can flavour their compliments a little more delicately, we will undertake to swallow them without so much grimacing; but at present, between Maynards and Pelhams, the incense offered is too coarse and overpowering for bystanders not to choke over it now and then. You certainly have not hitherto been fortunate in the intellect of your adorers."

"Ah," thought Lesbia, "if they only knew! There are people who can say and write flattering things of me in a great deal better words than John ever uses—real poetry; and they said and wrote them too long before I was rich, and admired me in my poor old washed-out muslin dresses; for whatever Mrs. Joseph tries to insinuate now, I never

will believe that any hint of what was likely to happen had reached the Dalys when they sought me out and made so much of me."

She half turned her head away from John towards the open window, through which the March wind blew, freshly laden with the perfume of the hyacinths and violets in pots that filled the balcony; and as these thoughts arose the pouting lips parted and trembled into a smile, and the eyes grew very dark and glistening, and her hand involuntarily let fall the folds of her habit and strayed upwards to touch a little bunch of green leaves that just peeped out from the bosom of her jacket.

"What have you got there?" asked John, on whom the sudden softening of the face had not been lost. "Let me see—shamrocks! Where did you get them? And what on earth put it into your head to ride out with a bunch of shamrocks in your bosom on St. Patrick's Day this year? You'll be taken for a Chartist."

"I don't care—there's no harm," cried Lesbia, startled, and blushing furiously. "I bought them of the old Irishwoman who sweeps the crossing at the end of Eaton Place; and, John, I've seen you give her a shilling yourself, though you do always say it's so wrong to give to beggars."

"An inconsistency in my behaviour which you think justifies you in getting yourself taken up by a special constable or cheered by a mob of Irish bricklayers. I hope your escort—that is he riding down the street, I presume—will enjoy the charge of you under the circumstances."

"My dear Lesbia, do give up your badge, if John thinks it likely to attract attention," said Bride anxiously.

"But it won't," Lesbia answered, giving the clump of faded leaves a hasty thrust inside her jacket-bosom. "No one can see it there without looking close. John only remarked upon it because he is crosser than usual this morning. I noticed it the instant he came into the room."

Bride's anxious eyes turned to her brother's face, and recognized the look of painful preoccupation and worry on the brow and in the eyes, that might always be observed in John as an accompaniment to the sharp, bantering talk that Lesbia voted crossness.

"I wonder whether there was a letter from Ireland among all those that came for him this morning," she said to herself, "and what there was in it to pain him so. I almost wish that some news would come to end it all quite. If she were fairly married to her rebel poet, he would be miserable at first, but it would be better for him in the end; and I suppose he would arrive in time at being able to see a three-leaved plant without speaking crossly and looking despair. What did possess little Lesbia to flourish the token in his face to-day? I have often enough given her hints to avoid Irish allusions as much as possible."

"There—I must go; they have all three ridden up to the door, and the groom has brought my horse round," exclaimed Lesbia, hastily gathering up the folds of her riding-habit again and running from the room. John followed to help her to mount, and caught her up in the hall, just as the servant, throwing open the door, disclosed a group of two ladies and a gentleman on horseback drawn up before the kerbstone.

"I am glad," John remarked, "to see it is only Marmaduke Pelham and his sisters for the sake of whose company you have thrown Mrs. Maynard over on Bride. I was afraid it might be some new victim, and then I should have felt it my duty to remonstrate. Captain Pelham may look out for himself; he is old enough, and big enough, and obtuse enough, to release me from any responsibility, however you may be intending to behave towards him."

Lesbia flashed an indignant look back at her brother as she ran down the steps, and before her friends greeted her found time to whisper energetically, "I would not be as clever as you are, John, for all the world, for you never can see anything else in other people but exactly how stupid they are; and you sneer—and you can't think how disagreeable it makes you."

"Yes, I can," John answered, with a sigh whose depths took Lesbia by surprise; "but don't put the sneering down to cleverness, I beg, for I assure you it savours much more of the opposite quality."

Captain Pelham had now alighted from his horse, and was begging leave to put Lesbia on hers, and John went round to shake hands with the two young ladies. While

they chatted with him, Lesbia bent down from her seat to put in a word, and something fell from her bosom.

"Oh my poor shamrocks, John!"

But Captain Pelham was beforehand with him in rescuing the green bouquet from under the horse's feet, and placing it, dripping with wet from the pavement, in the hand held out for it.

"Thanks, so many. I am afraid I shan't be able to wear my poor shamrocks again; but I should not have liked them to be actually trampled on, it would have been a bad omen for to-day."

"An omen very likely to be fulfilled, I should say," John muttered, quietly.

Meanwhile intelligent glances had been exchanged between Mary and Louisa Pelham, and they turned to John with simultaneous appeal for sympathy. "Now, is it not a most extraordinary thing," they exclaimed together, "how those two always do think and feel exactly alike on every point without speaking about it beforehand? Just do look at Duke's coat. He came down stairs with a bunch of shamrocks in his buttonhole this morning at breakfast-time, and Charlie and Fred, who, you know, went yesterday to be sworn special constables, threatened to take him into custody for a Chartist, and shook their staves at him; and papa was really a little annoyed, till we explained that it must be in compliment to Lesbia's having sung 'The Wearing of the Green' so splendidly last night. Duke would not confess his reason, but now it's plain enough. I wonder which of them thought of it first."

"An interesting subject of speculation. I am inclined to believe that Lesbia's brain is capable of conceiving such an original idea as wearing a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day without assistance. You know best about your brother's."

"But Mr. Thornley, you must allow that it is a very odd fancy for them both to take up just now. You have heard, no doubt, that there is a kind of expectation abroad that something will happen to-day in Dublin like what went on in Paris last February. Troops have gone over, and constables and arms, and most likely there'll be barricades and fighting. I heard an old gentleman tell

papa that St. Patrick's Day was a very likely day for the rebellion to begin, and that if it was so hundreds of people would be killed in Dublin before to-night. I wonder where our cousin Connor Daly is just now; he is a dreadful rebel, you know, and papa has lost all patience with him. Do you suppose there will be any news by to-night?"

"I don't expect it myself; but whatever news arrives it will not, I hope, prevent your coming to us for Lesbia's ball to-night and enjoying yourselves."

"Oh dear no, thank you. We would not disappoint darling Lesbia for the world, and we are looking forward amazingly to her first ball this season. She is to wear her new emeralds. Nothing shall prevent our coming to see how she looks in them, we promise you."

"Not the deluge," John muttered to himself, as he remounted the stairs to the drawing-room. "I wonder whether it is really coming at once, or whether it is only the distant roar of the streams at the water-gates we are hearing this year. At all events, we are unready enough for anything to happen."

Bride was at the drawing-room window, looking after the riders, when John joined her.

"Lesbia certainly looks very pretty on horseback," she said, drawing her head back when the cavalcade had turned out of the square; and "Captain Pelham is what most people would call a fine-looking man. He would take her to live in the country, at Abbots Thornley, and she would settle down after all her little vanities and flirtations into a very happy popular Lady Bountiful. I wonder whether that is to be the solution of all our difficulties, the happy consummation that is to relieve us of our grandeur. This second spring will hardly pass without her fate being settled one way or another. I hardly know what to wish."

"Can you answer it, to your conscience, to wish that any human creature you have a regard for, should be condemned to Marmaduke Pelham's companionship for the rest of her mortal life?"

"He is dull, poor fellow, certainly; I was observing him at his mother's *conversazione* last night, and trying to look upon him as a possible brother. For two entire

hours and a half, I calculated, he remained leaning with his back against a certain spot in the wall, and never speaking to anyone."

"There was no harm in that; I should have comported myself in precisely the same manner, if I had been let alone."

"Of course you were not, people know you can talk, and seek you out. However, I don't believe that Marmaduke is more silent than his cousin, Pelham Daly; and I used sometimes to think that *his* silence and reserve were rather attractions to Lesbia than otherwise. It piqued her curiosity."

"It is not the silence *I* complain of, but the speech—and there is this essential difference between the cousins—Young Daly's remarks, when they do come, are not unfrequently to the purpose; Marmaduke's never. I have even known a spark of actual Irish wit to have been struck out from young Daly, on due application of steel to his flint—that is to say, when his sister talks to him; but this other one is pure pudding-stone—you might hammer for ever and never get a light."

"But do you suppose Lesbia sees the difference? She does not value intellect as we do."

"The wiser she—it is a miserable idol to have set up."

"My dear John, at least wait till Mrs. Joseph Maynard has gone back to Whitecliffe, before you reverse your worship. I can't profess even to tolerate folly while she is with us."

"Is the coast clear of her now?—can I stay half an hour here with you in safety?"

"Most fortunately she has gone to call on a friend whom she does not consider grand enough to invite to Eaton Square, and she will not be back till twelve. To have you for half-an-hour's talk will be a rarely satisfactory beginning to my day."

"I don't know that I am going to talk, I feel more disposed to imitate Marmaduke Pelham, and stand with my back to the wall in silence for half an hour."

"You could do that as well down stairs. However, as you have established yourself in that niche of the window recess, put your head a little further back still, and look out. I made a discovery when I was watering the plants

yesterday, and I want you to share it. Can you see out far—across the trees, over the opposite house-tops, to the sloping roofs of some buildings in a back street beyond? There is an extra tall one, with three high twisty chimneys, and four attic windows, with dark-blue jalousies all in a row.”

“What of them?”

“Don’t they bring recollections to your mind? I knew them again in a minute, and went out last evening to make sure. The back street is Spring Street, and those attic rooms with the blue jalousies the apartments where we lived once for eighteen months. The last year you were at Westminster, when you were head boy and brought home such an armful of prizes, and poor mother cried so bitterly because she had nothing but bread and cheese to give you that day for dinner.”

“Let me see; it was the year before she died. It is sixteen years ago, then.”

“It feels like a century. I remember I used to make Eaton Square my way whenever I went on an errand, for the sake of looking up to the flowery balconies of the grand houses, and wondering what the people were like who lived inside. I was asking myself yesterday how I should have felt if a wise woman out of the ‘Magic Ring,’ my favourite reading in those days, had shown me through one of the windows a vision of ourselves as we are now, inhabiting this room.”

“Very much disappointed, I should say, if your castles in the air of that period at all equalled those with which I seasoned my bread-and-cheese dinners. I never doubted in those days that prosperity would come sooner or later, and I imagined her with a fairer face than she has shown me yet.”

“I believe I should have been somewhat disgusted if I had seen myself as I look now; for a girl’s castles in the air generally presuppose a little beautification, let her have in sober earnest ever such a poor opinion of her own looks; but, John, I think I should have been satisfied with what the years have done for you if I could have seen it then and understood as I do now. The outside circumstances, the riches and display, we two have very little to do with, and shall soon give up, but all that really graces our position, all the consideration worth having, is what

you have won. I don't think that even when you first began to feel your own powers and be ambitious in those Westminster days when your first little triumphs were won, that you could have expected greater recognition and literary success than the two last years have brought you. Reasonably—or even unreasonably—you could hardly have expected more."

"No, but I expected something different from what the reality of this sort of success proves to be. It's the character of the work itself I am disgusted with—my own powers, as you call them, not what they have brought me. I believe it is the experience of those three years' active work in Ireland that makes bookwork, now I have come back to it, seem tame. I can no longer, as I once did, consider it the most glorious occupation in the world to put words judiciously together."

"As if that was what you do! but, however, I dare say it is best for you to be dissatisfied with your own doings. I am sure I would not have you

"Bow before the little Drop of Light
That dim-eyed men call praise and glory here."

"It is a very dim little drop in my case."

"Oh, John, that's ambition, not humility."

"Or perhaps nothing more dignified than ill-humour and discontent."

"Will you own at once candidly that the discontent has a cause in the shape of a letter from Connemara among that bundle in your hand?"

"I have not had a line from anyone in that region of the world for months, I was going to say, but it is weeks. Anne O'Flaherty is much too ill to write, and there has been serious illness too at Eagle's Edge."

"Not Ellen?"

"No. The mother and Pelham—but both are recovering."

"How do you know all this, since you say you have had no letter?"

"If you choose to have particulars I will tell you. Yesterday I had to attend a committee of the House of Lords, where some evidence about the management of the funds employed in public works in Ireland was being

heard. Among the witnesses a very quaint-looking old man attracted my attention by his odd likeness to Peter Lynch, and hearing him called Dr. Lynch, and finding he had come straight from Good People's Hollow, I introduced myself and finally brought him home to dine here, and kept him for the evening while you were at the Pelhams."

"Ah, I noticed that you shirked all but the last half-hour; but we had not left the house when you came in yesterday; why did not you introduce Dr. Lynch to me? I should like to have seen him. Is he Peter's brother?"

"No, a cousin. He was very communicative over the whisky and water that I ordered in after dinner, and confided to me his whole history: beginning with a romantic boyish devotion to Anne O'Flaherty, that had sufficient strength to make him struggle up, step by step, from being the poor scholar and genius of a hedge school in Good People's Hollow, till he had succeeded in getting a doctor's degree in a Scotch University. The rest of the life does not correspond with the successful beginning. There was, I suppose, a great downfall of hopes, and a failure of purpose, when the devotion that had been such a spur failed of its object; and after that the man's talent and energy, of which he certainly has no common share, seem to have been exercised fitfully and very erratically. He has practised his profession in all parts of the world, in Japan, China, and the South Sea Islands, and was only settled in England six years ago, by a chance meeting at some seaside place with Mr. Daly, that revived all the old associations. He determined never to go beyond hearing of old friends again, and with the savings of his life bought a practice in Liverpool, which he threw up this last autumn, on getting a letter from his cousin Peter, imploring him, as a last hope of the people of the Hollow, to come back and save Anne O'Flaherty's life. They don't, he says, believe anything to be beyond the skill of the boy who left the place a poor scholar and comes back to it a travelled doctor, and Anne herself seems to trust him, and to have revived to a certain extent under his care. The famine fever gives plenty of exercise for his medical skill, and I suppose he has some funds left, at all events he does not seem to have any hesitation in obeying the call that brought him back to end where he began. A faithful old spaniel, crawling

back to die at his dying mistress's feet; one would not mind being such a spaniel oneself——"

"John!"

"You were wondering just now what the effect of seeing yourself as you are now would have been on yourself as a girl. All the time Dr. Lynch was talking to me I had an uncanny kind of feeling, as if it was the spectre of my own future self—myself of fifty years hence—that was talking with me, telling me the story of a restless disappointed life, with one strong feeling in it, supreme to the end."

"I don't believe you will let disappointment spoil your life. What brought the old man to London?"

"Anne sent him to give evidence of what he had seen during the winter in Connemara, hoping that his honesty and energy would be useful in clearing up misrepresentation. For my part, I am glad I have spoken with him. Since I have taken to write on Irish politics I must seize every opportunity of getting at information such as a man like this, trusted on all sides, can give."

"Hum!—of course he gave you news of the Dalys?"

"Pelham Daly has had a touch of the fever, and Mrs. Daly been seriously ill; but both are recovering."

"And how is Connor going on?"

"There was a little reserve in speaking of him. Dr. Lynch avoided public questions, so I suspect, old as he is, he is secretly in sympathy with Young Ireland, and I am a little afraid he is influencing Pelham Daly and Miss O'Flaherty to be less decided in their opposition to Connor's politics than is advisable for their own safety. That cousin of the Dalys, the poet whose verses you admired, and who is now editing one of the most rabid and dangerous of the Young Ireland newspapers, has I find been staying for weeks at a time during the winter with Miss O'Flaherty at the Hollow, and on one occasion, he and young Daly and the two O'Roones had a serious quarrel, which ended in a duel between Daly and Darby O'Roone, in which O'Roone was slightly wounded."

"They are very disreputable people, are they not, both father and son? Were they not concerned in that disgraceful case of ejection, where a whole village of fever-

stricken people were turned out to die on the roads? You wrote a leader in the *Times* about it, did you not?"

"Yes, it occurred on some property which once belonged to the Dalys, and which old O'Roone purchased probably with money he cheated them out of in past times. I don't wonder at Pelham Daly's disgust and anger, but considering that he was brought up at Pelham Court, I should have thought he might have found some less Irish way of gratifying his feelings than by shooting young O'Roone's little finger off."

"Was O'Roone's cruelty to his tenants the cause of the quarrel?"

"Not the final cause; I imagine there had been a great deal of irritation occasioned by Pelham's remonstrances and by O'Donnell's newspaper tirades attempting to stir up indignation against them throughout the country, and at last the three young men met accidentally in the coffee-room of the little hotel at Ballyowen, and some insolent speech of young O'Roone's provoked a blow from Pelham. It is most unfortunate. It secures the Dalys a vigilant enemy in their own neighbourhood, who is certain to seize the first opportunity Connor's imprudence gives him to gratify his revenge against the household at Eagle's Edge, while at the same time he will be furthering his own interest by making a display of zeal for Government in hunting out rebels. I wish I was there to keep an eye on events. I certainly should not have allowed the duel to have taken place if I had been at Castle Daly, and I think I could have prevented the ejectments."

"I think you over-rate your influence. My sincere belief is that we should do more harm than good this year at Castle Daly. Young O'Roone was always hanging about Lesbia—calling at the Castle, and contriving to meet her on her rides. It was hinted to me once or twice that he gave himself airs as a favoured suitor."

"Why did not you speak to me?"

"I hardly thought it worth your notice; and to confess the truth, I did not like to acknowledge to you—as I must in honesty have done—that there had been something to blame in Lesbia's manner. She is a born coquette, poor child, and never can help playing off a complacent lover against a tardy one."

"By the tardy lover do you mean to allude to Pelham Daly? I thought you were convinced that there was no sort of attraction between him and Lesbia."

"My good friend, it was you who were *convinced*. If you will be so kind as to remember, I warned you about both brothers from the first. Lesbia has, I am sorry to say, so many ways of flirting that one is long in finding out what are the genuine symptoms in her case; but I am afraid this story of the duel throws considerable light on some vagaries in her behaviour that are puzzling me just now."

"But can she have heard of the duel?"

"I suspect she knows a good deal more of the rights of it than you do. Ever since we left Ireland she has kept up a fitful correspondence with the youngest of those tall, gossiping Miss Joices, who live in the ivied house just outside Ballyowen, and who in spite of all my efforts managed to establish a good deal of intimacy with Lesbia while we lived at the Castle. The fire of letters backwards and forwards has been very active lately, and on one occasion I noticed that Lesbia came down stairs from the perusal of a thick budget with eyes positively swollen up with crying. Ever since there has been a change in her manner; she is snappy to her most obsequious adorers, and sings Irish songs with a greater degree of enthusiasm than the pleasure of provoking Sir Charles Pelham quite accounts for: and then the shamrocks this morning; how came she even to know that it was St. Patrick's Day?"

"If she reads the newspaper ever so carelessly, and interests herself at all in public events, she could not help knowing this year."

"But public events only interest Lesbia when private people she cares for are likely to be affected by them. That bunch of shamrock does not represent a political party in her eyes, you may be very sure, but that one of the young Dalys—whichever it may be—who occupies her thoughts at present. If by chance it was a boast concerning her favour on young O'Roonas' part that provoked Pelham Daly's blow, then you may be sure he is the reigning hero. I am sorry to say it of her, but I am very much afraid she belongs to the order of women who feel themselves glorified by being quarrelled over and who, if

pierced hearts were tangible things and could be strung together into ornaments like scalps, would like nothing better than to appear in chains and bracelets of them."

"Are not you judging her harshly?"

"I think not. I am perhaps putting the case strongly to counteract a purpose that I see growing in your mind. You are longing to carry us all back to Castle Daly, and I am determined you shall fairly see all the possibilities such a course involves."

"I could go there alone."

"Yes, but I want you here to help me through the rest of the London season in looking after Lesbia. How solemnly you spoke at first about guarding her from fortune-hunters. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, and I think it was you then who put in a word for giving fair play to her affections, and not interfering with her choice when it came to the point of her making one for herself. You know best how it is with her; but for my own part I wonder sometimes whether we did wisely when we took her from a place where she had some rational pursuits, and might have turned her money to some useful account at this time, to plunge her into the aimless dissipation she is following now. Is the advantage of her ending her career by marrying Marmaduke Pelham so very manifest?"

"I think we were bound to show her something more of the world than that little corner of Connemara, before she was allowed to choose her future husband; remember she will have to keep him for life."

"I hope the choosing process won't go on indefinitely; she seems by some occult affinities to draw all the most inane young men in London together to choose from."

"They don't come to court you, sir, that's why you find them so inane. If you grumble I shall attribute your impatience to the same cause that made Goldsmith indignant with a crowd for looking at a pretty woman in a hotel window instead of at himself."

"I should not have thought, madam, that you would encourage the pretty woman to gather the crowd to look at her."

"Well, be patient, the dissipation is working its own cure. She is tiring of it herself. I can give you a proof.

She has not said one word to me about her dress for this evening, or so much as looked at it, as far as my knowledge goes, since it came home."

"You call that something to be thankful for; and last year at this time she was content to lead a rational life without a thought of balls and ball-dresses, and had grown so fond of country pursuits that you found it hard to drag her away. You ought to be ashamed of your work."

"Hum!—if country pursuits *had* been the attraction—but I know you choose to be blind, so where is the use of arguing? Let me have sufficient time for my experiment in my turn, and if I fail I will yield with a good grace. Give us your countenance for a few weeks longer, and then if Lesbia has not meanwhile become engaged to Marmaduke Pelham, and if she continues to give little wistful hints about wanting to return to Castle Daly, I promise to leave off throwing cold water on her plans, and frowning down her flattering attempts at confidences."

"She has been giving hints, and you have been frowning her down with a 'little hoard of maxims'—you strong-minded worldling."

"Yes, for the present; and I am sure I am right. If I had any confidence in the stability of her preferences, or if I knew for certain which of the young Daly brothers her thoughts turned to, I should be less implacable; but while, so far as I can make out, she is undecided between the two of them, and when one is such a hair-brained young fellow as Connor, I am sure I do right in preventing her from giving her feelings shape by speaking of them. Imagine what it would be to have her engaged to a man, or rather a boy, of two-and-twenty, who was involved in a conspiracy, and liable to be taken up and tried for treason, and hanged, or transported for life. She would think it very romantic for a month or so; but it would hardly be for her happiness. She had better be safe and dull with Marmaduke Pelham."

"But is it really a toss-up which of these three men she marries? I must say I don't profess to understand such gossamer feelings, and must leave the management to you. In such a case I should think it signified very little what happened."

"It signifies that she should get the most reliable man of the three for her husband; and in justice to Lesbia, I

must ask you to remember that I am not describing her feelings, only my own state of puzzle about them. Perhaps she herself could give us a much more straightforward story of her heart if she chose. I wish to-night, for once in your life, you would come into the drawing-room to notice what is going on, instead of to draw a knot of men into a corner and talk politics. I want you to tell me your impressions of Lesbia's manner when we are alone."

Bride was almost sorry she had made the request, when, some hours later, a timid knock came to her bedroom door, and Lesbia entered, ready dressed for the evening. The first glance at her dress almost provoked Bride to exclaim—"So *that* was the reason you kept silent on the subject of your ball-dress till it was on, and no time left for me to object?"

Then the thought rushed upon her, "It is Connor Daly she cares for then after all." And she was conscious that her countenance fell, and that she looked grave and disapproving, while Lesbia, with a conscious blush on her face, stood before her and shook out soft falling folds of white Limerick lace, fastened with green ribbons and bunches of shamrock, and further set off by pendants and sprays of emeralds set in trefoil shape, that glittered on her neck and arms, and peeped out among the coils of dark hair that encircled her head. It was "the wearing of the green" very daintily illustrated.

"I thought it would be a change from the sort of flowers and ornaments everybody wears," Lesbia hesitated, "and that it was appropriate to the day. You know John said once he thought it stupid of ladies to put so little meaning into their dress, and that it would be a good idea to illustrate days and seasons by what they wore. I wanted to please him by acting on his hint."

"My dear child," said Bride, quickly, "I was not thinking of finding any fault with your dress; there is no need to excuse it to me. I wish you could get over your Whitecliffe habit of making excuses for every single thing you do—it is quite unnecessary between sisters," and "never answers the purpose of deceiving me," she would have added, if she had spoken out her thoughts to the end. Instead, she turned back to the looking glass, and finished

adjusting her own solid gold ornaments with very little perception of their effect on the black velvet dress John had presented her with for this occasion. As the door closed behind Lesbia a tear of compunction for her own ill-temper welled up, and when that was winked away, others, provoked by fast-occurring disturbing reflections, followed. What would all the Pelhams think of Lesbia's fanciful attire? This "wearing of the green" was almost a declaration of war against Sir Charles Pelham whose hatred of everything Irish had been wrought up to a pitch of ferocity by Connor's late conduct; and in Bride's anticipations it was equivalent to a *congé* to his son, Marmaduke Pelham, on whose solid character and steadfastness she was beginning to build her fairest hopes for Lesbia's happiness. As she went to the washstand to bathe her eyes, deeply ashamed of herself for running the risk at her age of coming among strangers with traces of tears on her face, she heard through the open window the loud voices of newsvendors in the square, crying the contents of the evening papers. "Latest news: The insurrection has broken out simultaneously in all parts of Ireland! Barricades—fierce fighting in Dublin streets! Great gatherings in the West." It was probably only a *ruse* to sell the papers; but the very possibility of a time coming when some such announcement as that might bring terror and dismay into their household caused Bride's spirits to sink lower than they had done for many a day. She acknowledged within herself that it *was* deplorable selfishness to be deeply moved by public calamities mainly because the private concerns of friends were affected by them; but none the less did she wish ardently that Irish words and names were as unfamiliar to them all now as they would have been if disturbances in that part of the world had occurred sixteen years ago—when they were living in the attics in Spring Street.

It was some minutes before Bride's eyes could be pronounced to be in a condition to show down stairs, and meanwhile Lesbia in her green and white had the brightly-lighted ballroom all to herself. In another half-hour it would be crowded with guests. Rich people and titled people, who had been introduced to the Thornleys' acquaintance by their cousins the Pelhams—learned and

distinguished people whom John's growing reputation attracted into their society—and more or less they would all pay court to little Lesbia. She would be the conspicuous object, observed by everyone, talked about by everyone, whose notice or neglect would make the pleasure or the disappointment of the evening. She would see anxious faces relax and brighten if she came near, eager faces change if she turned away. This little allegory she was acting all by herself, without anyone's having the faintest clue to its real meaning; this enigma of her dress would give rise to a great deal of speculation to-night, and perhaps send some one or two people away from the house with really anxious hearts. Well, they deserved anxiety and disappointment, for courting her only now she was rich. No doubt they could not help the misfortune of never having known her poor; but since they had not that claim to her consideration, their possible annoyance was only matter for amusement. So far Lesbia's thoughts carried her with smiling lips and little tripping steps down the long room, then, as she drew near the window she paused, for a graver thought had arisen. There had been much secret pleasure in arraying herself in her green and white this day; but the people (she would not say the person, even low to her own heart) for whom she had thus dressed herself would never know the homage she was paying to the land where her treasure and her heart really dwelt. All at once the lights and flowers and gay decorations of the ballroom passed from her sight, obliterated by a mental picture at which she seemed to be gazing through a distant window—a low-ceilinged scantily-furnished room, filled with the ruddy glow of a peat fire—soft night airs blowing through the casement,—a group gathered round the hearth,—a pale lady reclining on a couch,—a masculine figure seated by her side, and holding her hand. This figure seemed to be bent forward, as if the eyes were looking far away through the window towards her, and the firelight on the cheeks showed traces of illness and suffering. A girl on a low stool by the fire sat watching the other two, her cheek resting on her hand, and long coils of golden hair falling on her shoulders. They were all silent, dreaming out their thoughts apart, in the quiet twilight-hour after a busy day, but they were not thinking of her. Lesbia felt as if the

sheen of her jewelled dress and the glitter around her shut her out as by a spell from a share in their sad thoughts. They could not know—for what should bring such a knowledge to them?—that one token of recollection, just a few moments of sharing in their sad life, would be worth, ah ! so much more to her than all the splendour and the gaiety she lived among. She would not have believed that of herself a year ago, so how could *he* believe it? He might be ready to risk his life and make himself a dangerous enemy rather than hear her lightly spoken of; it was the recollection of the little Babette he had been kind to and defended from small troubles in old times that had prompted him to that action—but believe her capable of being as generous to them as they had been to her was what it seemed he never, never would bring himself to believe. And since it was quite impossible to tell him this of herself, that great, great gulf of separation would always divide them. A voice from outside caught her ear at this point of her reverie: “Latest news—Fighting in Dublin Streets—Formidable risings in the West of Ireland.” She ran out into the balcony, but the crier had already moved too far down the street for her to catch distinctly what he said; and she was just hurrying from the room with the purpose of despatching a servant in pursuit of him, when John, entering with a newspaper in his hand, intercepted her in the doorway. She seized his arm, and clung to it, pale and trembling. “Oh, John! you have got the newspaper—have you heard—is it true?”

“Is what true?”

“What they are crying in the street—the fighting—the West of Ireland?”

To her surprise John put his arm tenderly round her to support her, and kissed her cheek before he answered.

“No, no—nothing of the kind. It’s a false report got up to sell the evening papers. I have certain information that all is going well. The morning has passed quietly in Dublin. And the open-air meeting, where it was feared disturbance might arise, has been postponed.”

“But it will be held some day then?”

“It will pass off peaceably whenever it takes place, you may be sure. The postponement shows that the men who advocate violence either believe that the time for a rising

has not come, or are wiser than their words, and don't mean to act upon them."

"For Dublin; but in the country—in the West?"

"There will be no rising without some signal from the leaders; and if I understand their tactics, they had rather not have it till after the harvest. I don't myself think it will ever be. One can't help being very anxious about one's friends, knowing that several of them are more or less implicated; but one hopes that even the insurrectionists may prove not to be utterly blind to the way in which events are tending, and that they will come to their senses before more harm is done."

"Ah! that is just what I think."

"You, Babette; why, how long have you turned politician?"

"I only mean that I never did believe, as Bride does that there could be any danger in our going back to Connemara this summer, and," (dropping her voice), "I shall not be in the least afraid to travel with you to Castle Daly, and stay there for as long as you like, if you should happen to want to go there on business at any time. My opinion about the Irish rebellion is just this—that I feel sure it never will turn to anything that need prevent our living again in Connemara."

"That is compressing the whole affair into a nutshell, indeed," said John, smiling; but it was not at all a satirical smile. They were now walking up the room together, and he still kept his arm round Lesbia's waist, and was looking down at her with the playfully kind protecting expression in his eyes that Lesbia had thought belonged to Bride only, and would never be turned on herself. Then he touched her dress, and did not seem to feel the objection to it Bride had shown. "Irish lace, is it not?" he asked.

"Yes; I asked Nora Joice to buy it for me from Miss O'Flaherty's stores. I thought they—Miss O'Flaherty—would like that better than my sending money directly to her, and it was an excuse for writing again to Nora, whom I wanted to hear from." To her added wonder, this avowal, more confidential than any she had made to Bride, procured her another affectionate brotherly kiss on the

cheek; then after a pause John said, "It was a good thought. You never, I suppose, write to or hear directly from Miss Daly?"

"Not now; I wrote twice during the winter, and she never answered my letters. One does not like to have one's letters unanswered; and Bride says it shows they don't care to hear from me any more."

"A very natural conclusion to come to certainly."

Lesbia, who had been keeping her eyes well hidden under their long lashes, suddenly turned an appealing, imploring look up to her brother's face. "Was that his opinion too? Did he really think it?" Eyes met eyes, and each pair read something in the other that opened a way to sympathy and community of interest such as had not been dreamed of hitherto; and Lesbia, losing all thought of her laces and jewel pendants, threw her arms impetuously round her brother's neck. "Dear John, we will go to Ireland together, even if there is ever such a dreadful rebellion," she whispered; "and I do believe—I really do—that when we are there, people won't be able to help being a little glad to see us."

The first loud knock at the street-door coming at the end of Lesbia's speech saved John from the embarrassment of a reply, and sent Lesbia fluttering up to the mirror at the far end of the room to shake out her crushed flounces before it, and satisfy herself by a furtive glance into its depths that the colour had come back into her cheeks, and that none of the elaborate plaits and bows, and jewel sprays on her little head, had been disarranged during her moment or two of self-forgetfulness. John watched her during these proceedings, and again once or twice in the course of the evening, with some wonder. Could it be the same girl, whose wistful glance had a few minutes ago seemed to give him a glimpse into a heart full of tender feeling and humble unexacting love? Which was the real Lesbia—the loyal-hearted maiden he had newly discovered, or the bright, mischievous-eyed coquette, whose vivacity and caprices kept the attention of a dozen admirers happily on the alert? In order to fulfil his promise to Bride, John gave a greater amount of attention to the passing events of the evening than was his wont. He saw Marmaduke Pelham enter the room with the bored,

injured expression on his face that the prospect of spending three or four hours in company indoors usually brought there, and he observed how these looks of constraint and annoyance were mitigated and then vanished altogether under the influence of the five, ten minutes, quarter of an hour's chat which Lesbia, in interludes of livelier flirtations with more eager admirers, contrived to bestow upon him. This was carrying coquetry too far, John opined, as he watched the honest foolish face softening and brightening till it actually glowed with pleasure, while the treacherous glib-talk went on. Lesbia ought to know when feelings were too real to be played with, and should be able to respect them. Once, when the pair had disappeared from the ballroom fully twenty minutes, John took it upon himself to make a tour of the anterooms and staircase, taking in his wake a spectacled young savant, a special pet of his, with a view of presenting him to Lesbia as a suitable partner for the next quadrille, and so breaking up the dangerous *tête-à-tête*. Marmaduke Pelham's towering head and broad shoulders were soon discerned behind a stand of plants that half filled a window-recess on the upper landing; but there was a press of people ascending and descending the staircase, and John and his friend were swayed backwards and forwards by the crowd, sometimes approaching so near the recess that they could not avoid hearing scraps of the conversation of its occupants, and sometimes obliged to move aside to let others pass. The two voices were eager and confidential, though by no means low, and the sentences that reached John's ears were hardly such as he expected to hear. "Oh, yes," in Lesbia's voice, "I remember there *was* a white thorn near the gate; but no one ever told us it had been planted by Mr. Daly when Ellen was born. We moved it and put an arbutus there instead. I see you know the garden as well, if not better, than I do." "My cousin Ellen was always describing it to me—that time when they spent a whole summer at Pelham Court just after I left college." "That must have been quite a year and a half before I first saw them." A movement in the crowd carried John further off, and when he was again within earshot but pinned against the wall by a barricade of ladies' skirts, a fresh subject had been

started. Captain Pelham had actually taken a fold of Lesbia's dress between his fingers.

"Yes," he was saying, "I know the look of this sort of stuff very well. My cousin Ellen wore a dress of it one St. Patrick's day when they were with us, there's nothing prettier in the world, only she had real shamrock to loop up the gathers or whatever you call them, and I got it for her. By Jove, how well I remember it! She made me go out half a dozen times before she would allow that I had gathered the right things."

"I remember Ellen Daly's Limerick-lace dress, too. She wore it the very first evening I ever spent with them at Whitecliffe, at a little party given for Mr. Pelham Daly's coming of age. I had never been to a dance before in my life, and how I did enjoy it! I made up my mind then that if I ever had a house of my own, and gave a ball in it, I would wear a dress exactly like Ellen Daly's."

"But, somehow——It's a first-rate dress, this of yours, and looks splendiferous indeed——yet I don't know that it is altogether equal to that one I remember. It does not fall exactly in the same way, or look so floating like a cloud, or wings, or—I don't know what—a kind of effect that one can't get out of one's head again when one has once seen it."

"Lesbia!" cried John, struggling to the front at last, "I have been hunting you for ten minutes, several people are inquiring after you, and I have brought Professor Fletcher, who wishes to be introduced to you for the next quadrille."

The two behind the flower-screen, started apart as if a bomb had fallen between them. Captain Pelham sprang upright, colouring furiously, and stood twisting his gloves into a tight-rope as if he were required instantly to wring a supply of water for the plants out of them. Lesbia recovered herself in an instant and sailing from the shelter of the flower-stand, executed a stately little curtsy to Professor Fletcher, followed by an elaborate consultation of her tablets, during which she contrived to intimate her surprise at John's ignorance in supposing that her hand for a dance could be obtained at the expense of so very little forethought. "The next quadrille—the next four or five

dances were, she was sorry to say, out of the question; but she should be most happy to see what she could do—perhaps No. 19—it would be after supper; but——”

“At least come back into the ballroom,” cried John, impatient.

Lesbia condescended to follow him, but paused on the threshold of the crowded room. “The music was beginning, and there was no use,” she said, “in going in till her partner turned up, he would most likely come to look for her, and if not, she was sure Professor Fletcher would prefer waiting in the cool anteroom, and John might go and tell Bride where she was if he liked.”

John retired, convinced of his incapacity to deal with ballroom tactics, and Lesbia stood fanning herself in the doorway, and occasionally throwing disjointed sentences over her shoulder at the discomfited Professor, who began to wish heartily that he had not said anything to his friend about wishing to dance. This disdainful jewelled little lady was a more formidable partner than he had anticipated.

One or two gentlemen came up to invite Miss Maynard to dance; and Lesbia again consulted her tablets. The name was rubbed out, but—she was quite sure she was waiting for somebody—and if he did not appear soon, her brother had brought her a partner——

“Who won’t be wanted, for the right one you’re waiting for, without knowing it, is here at your elbow, and dying with impatience while you talk of waiting.”

There was again a crowd in the doorway coming out of the ballroom, and some one leaned forward between two ladies and whispered these words into Lesbia’s ear. Lesbia looked back, hardly able to suppress a cry of astonishment, and met Connor Daly’s laughing eyes fixed admiringly on her. The next moment he was by her side shaking hands eagerly, and drawing her fingers under his arm to lead her off. “Come this way back into the ballroom; we’ll get a seat behind the dancers, where we’ll be as quiet as if we were on the top of the hill behind Castle Daly, and have our talk out. I’ve been here an hour watching for an opportunity to speak to you. You loveliest darling of the world, I do believe you have been waiting for me. You have, indeed, put ‘the green above the red’ triumphantly for me to-night.”

"Connor, how dare you!" cried Lesbia, trying to withdraw her hand from his arm, "how dare you speak so to me?"

"I'll beg your pardon on my bended knees if you like; but it's the green and white that's too much for me altogether. To see you 'wearing the green' to-day! What can I do, but go mad with joy and triumph!"

"But I hope you won't. I want to hear about them all at home. I want you to let me stay and talk."

"Let you, you preciouses jewel of the world that ever wore Old Ireland's colours. Let you?"

"But I can't stay with you if you talk nonsense. I shall be obliged to go to Bride and tell her you are here; and there are so many questions I long to ask."

"Sit down just here, then, behind this fat old lady's back and begin. Lac-y-Core itself would hardly be better shelter for us; and I vow there sha'n't come a sound from my lips to vex you, if I have to bite out my tongue to keep the loving words back. You can't hinder my eyes from seeing, thank the powers."

"You're not changed, Connor," said Lesbia, after looking at him for a minute, with a sort of soft inquiry in her eyes, quite emptied for that minute of their coquettishness. "You are just the same dear absurd boy you used to be at Whitecliffe, for all that has happened to the others."

"That is all you know about it, Miss Maynard. I the same as I was at Whitecliffe a hundred years ago! I indifferent to all that is happening in Ireland! If you really knew how it is with me you would not grudge me the spurt of high spirits that nothing on earth but the sight of you looking kindly at me, and wearing the colours that show where your heart is, could have given me. I'll make up for it fast enough when the evening's over. Don't grudge my being happy this one night."

"Indeed I don't, I only want to know how you come to be here. They are some of them ill at home, are not they?"

"My mother has been ill, and Pelham; but they are recovering. I have not been home very lately. Ellen said I should only be another anxiety; and you know I am supposed to be studying in Dublin for the Irish bar."

"Then why are you here in London?"

"You ask me that?"

"Why should not I ask you?"

"You did not send for me, your own most generous, kindest-hearted, beautiful self."

"I send for you, Connor—what can you mean?"

"There, sit down again—don't burn me altogether to cinders with your angry looks—and I'll tell you what happened, and you shall say whether I was so very far wrong in supposing your kind hand was in it, knowing as I do that you are with us in your heart. You must have heard that there has been a talk of sending delegates from our party to Paris, to congratulate the Provisional Government on the success of the Revolution in France. Smith O'Brien was to be the chief, but several names of younger men were mentioned as likely to be chosen as his colleagues, and one of the newspapers named me. I am not thought such an absurd boy among the boys at Conciliation Hall, I can tell you."

"You are all absurd boys together there, John would say."

"I don't suppose I should have been chosen, however; the meeting was to have been held to-day, and has been postponed; but two days ago, the day after my name had been printed in the *Nation* as a possible delegate, I had a letter, inclosing a ten-pound note, and purporting to be from a friend who wished to save the Association the expense of my journey to Paris, and requesting in return that I would come up to London the day before the meeting, and await my associates there. I took the letter to D'Arcy O'Donnell and told him——"

"That you thought it came from me."

"Don't be angry; he is the closest friend I have in the world, and could not be that without having heard of you. Besides, he stayed in Connemara for six weeks, between the Hollow and Eagle's Edge, and got to care for us all like a brother, or better, and has had your name brought up to him oftener than you may suppose. He advised me to obey you, feeling sure that you had a good reason for the command you sent, and that, Englishwoman as you are, you are true to the cause in your heart. Besides, he was quite sure I should lose nothing by coming, for there would be no fighting to-day; so I came,—and now I'm

here, you won't tell me you did not send for me? The letter had a London postmark, and the handwriting was like yours, a little disguised."

"Then it was John who wrote it. He reads all the Irish newspapers, and he was very anxious, I know, about the expected disturbances to-day. He wanted to lure you out of the way of getting yourself into a scrape. Not for your own sake, no, nor for mine—of that I can assure you—but to shield your people at home from additional troubles on your account; he thinks they have enough already."

A cloud of disappointment and vexation passed over Connor's face, and then, recovering himself, he burst out laughing. "Well, I've been duped; but, after all, the best of the bargain remains with me. I've lost none of the fun in Dublin, and as I've got the money I'll go to Paris with the delegates, and see what successful revolutionists look like; and if after that, and the sight I'm having to-night, I let myself, through any one's stratagem, be kept out of the thick of the real fighting when it comes, you may say what you like of me, for I shall deserve it."

"Connor, you really must believe that I did not know of your coming, and do not wear this dress to encourage you in the schemes that John says are mad and wicked."

"What do you wear it for, then?"

"One can love Ireland, as Ellen and Mrs. O'Flaherty do, without wanting people to fight."

"I don't call it loving a country to see her trampled upon and *not* want to fight. You don't sympathize with us then, after all?"

"It was only your own imagination that ever made you think I did. You wrote verses about my sympathizing with you, and I only read them."

"It's very hard on a fellow to be lifted up to the height of hope, and then thrown down again. Babette, a minute ago, I thought you loved me."

"Hush, the music has ceased, and the old lady has turned her head round to listen to what we are saying. Let me take you to Bride."

"No, no, I will have it out with you now we have begun. I must know the truth, and besides I would not have your brother see me here for worlds; he shall never

know I was taken in so easily. Does not that large window at the end of the room open on to a balcony? Let us go there while the crowd pass on to supper." The balcony proved to be empty when they gained it. Connor leaned against one of the iron pillars, and Lesbia stood and looked up at him quite unembarrassed, not even troubling herself to pull to pieces the leaves of the creepers near her.

"Babette," he began, "I did think you loved me. Ever since those old Whitecliffe days I have thought so. I don't mean that I'm a fit match for you—of course I know I'm not—but I'm not a fool exactly, and I intend, and always have intended, to make myself something you could be proud of in the end. I believed you'd take me on trust for the present, because I always thought you loved me."

"Yes, Connor, I know you did," Lesbia answered; "I know you thought so in the old Whitecliffe days; but that was not your loving me."

"Not loving you! I not love you? What can you mean? Why, from the very first moment I saw you, I thought you the sweetest, brightest, dearest, most delightful little girl in the whole world."

"Yes, but——"

"What more would you have?"

"Nothing more—not so much from you, dear Connor; only that you should leave off thinking anything about love, and let us be true friends. I have been to blame, for I used to want everybody to be in love with me; but I am changed now. I am tired of lovers, and I want you for a friend to whom I can talk comfortably, and who will help me."

"That's all! And you stand there smiling and holding out your hand as if you did not even believe that what you say is a terrible disappointment, when I really do love you so much, and was so sure that you cared about me, at least a little, in the other way."

"That was a pity; but friendship is better than nothing, is it not? and we can be good friends."

"Tell me the whole truth. Is it that you think Pelham loves you better than I do?"

"Good evening, Mr. Connor Daly; I am going into the house."

He caught her dress as she was disappearing through the window. "Babette, dear Babette, don't go away angry with me. We are friends if you like, and I will never say another word to vex you as long as I live."

"Then let us shake hands, and come into the house to supper."

"No, not yet. Come back to the end of the balcony; I have something else to say to you, something that O'Donnell advised me to tell you, though we thought then that it would be a good deal easier for me to speak than I shall find it now. Yes—come; it's nothing about myself, so you may as well listen."

They walked to the far end of the little balcony; but Connor crossed his arms on the parapet, and took a long look down into the street before he entered on his new subject.

"Babette," he began, "looking up at last, "the hardest part is, that as you won't believe how much I love you, you won't give me credit for being as generous as I really am in telling you the story I have brought you here to hear. You'll never know what an effort it costs me to put away my last chance with my own hands, and quite give you up, by telling you this—for I know it's just that I shall be doing."

"I thought you were not going to talk about yourself."

"Only those few words; and I think you might be kind to a fellow who feels he is cutting the last inch of ground from under his feet, and who is sore and bruised enough with one fall already."

"Dear Connor, when you think it over you will see I am right; but you said we were not to discuss that again."

"I will make myself of consequence to Ireland if I am not to you, and some day you sha'n't be ashamed of having had me for your first lover; for, Babette, I did love you first—long before Pelham began to take any notice of you. But now I'll go on to what you'll care to hear. I meant to tell it you when I was sure of you—when the pleasure you would take in it would be pride in the brother I was giving you. Babette, Pelham has had a chance that I would have given the world for, of punishing a fellow who spoke disrespectfully of you, and complained publicly that you had jilted him after giving him good

reason to think you cared for him. D'Arcy was present when the quarrel took place, and says that no one could have behaved better than Pelham all through. The other was such a vulgar low fellow, he deserved nothing but the thrashing he got on the spot; but Pelham accepted his challenge rather than that any one should have occasion to say he was not ready to abide by all the consequences of his interference. I had not even the chance that I think he might have given his own brother of going out with him; he took D'Arcy for his second, and I never heard a breath of it till it was all over. It happened a day or two before Pelham was taken ill of the fever."

"Yes, I know; you need not tell me any more. I heard all about it three weeks ago."

"Who could have told you? We thought we kept the duel very close; and as for the other side, they cut such a poor figure, I should have thought they would have held their tongues."

"Such things always get talked of, I suppose. Nora Joice wrote me the whole story, my share in it as well as the rest."

"So in all this business I'm not even to have the glory of cutting my own throat. Somebody else finished off my chance, it seems, before I even knew it."

"You are mistaken, Connor, if you think that hearing this story has changed in the slightest degree my thoughts of any one but myself. I was more ashamed and unhappy than I had ever been in my life before when I heard it, for I knew it was my vanity that had obliged some one to risk his life to save my name from being lightly spoken of, but it did not alter my way of thinking of any one else."

"You mean to say that you don't like old Pelham at all the better for his pluck in punishing the man who slandered you. Well, it would be odd if I were to begin to speak up for him to you, but I must say I don't understand your not being the least touched or grateful."

"I did not say that."

"Babette, I think I see what is the only other thing you can mean, but I sha'n't say it, or else you'll run away from me again. If you do not like him the better for that, it must be because——"

"You said you would not say it."

"Then shake hands upon it. It's all over with me, and I give in, and I'll do my best not to grudge you to Pelham, for he has behaved very well to me since he has been the head of the house, and been friendly to D'Arcy, which counts for a great deal with me. I would not have believed this could happen in the old Whitecliffe days, but I'm not going to imitate Darby O'Roone, and complain of the sweet ways that ought to make every one who sees you proud to love you, and ready to serve you all his life for nothing."

"No, not for nothing, Connor; we are always to be the best friends in the world, you know; and supposing that your guess is true, don't you see I have let you know more about my thoughts than any one else in the world? I have trusted you."

"You have trusted me and you shall never repent it. Don't be angry, dear; that one kiss on your hand Pelham himself would not grudge me. It was to seal beforehand a bargain we have to make. I meant to ask it as a favour, but now it's you that'll thank me, I expect, for coming to you. I did not tell you the story of the duel for nothing. I wanted some one I could trust, and whose heart I thought was with us, to know the danger that Pelham is in from having made an enemy of Darby O'Roone. Darby has sworn to be revenged, and D'Arcy and I know, though through such secret ways that we can make no use of our knowledge, that he has set spies to work, and is plotting to convict Pelham of acting secretly for us; and by and by, if there is a rising, and things should go wrong, which is just possible, he will be prepared with what will pass for evidence against Pelham. We are ready to take the risk of failure and of all that will follow; we think that anything is better than letting our people die tamely, or submit to be packed in gangs and sent from their own land across the seas; but we don't want to have others dragged in to share the danger against their will. You see, it's my mother I'm thinking of. It would be hard on her to have Pelham touched; I don't count for so much with any one, it seems, and should have no scruple in going in for anything that may turn up, if only he were secured from being involved in danger with me."

"But oh, Connor, surely if he does keep clear—if he has nothing to do with your conspiracies, he cannot be brought into danger."

"Do you suppose there were no innocent people imprisoned and hanged after '98?—no spies then like O'Roone, who succeeded in wreaking their private revenge under cover of zeal for Government? Have not you learned so much Irish History as that from Ellen and me?"

"Dear Connor, tell me what you think I can do. Imprisoned!—hanged! Oh, I did not know it was such dangers as those you were thinking of."

"Of course we don't mean it to be like '98 over again; we hope to succeed this time, as the French have done; but I for one shall go in for it with a gayer heart if I can secure that, whatever happens to us, O'Roone's spite will be balked of its gratification; it was mainly to trust that part of the business to you that I came here to-night."

"Tell me what I can do—and indeed, indeed——"

"There, there, don't tremble so and turn pale, or I don't know how I'll ever be able to bear it without offending you again. Why, how your eyes shine, Babette, as if I had asked you to face a dozen mad bulls, or march up to a scaffold; I believe you'd do it, and who would have thought it of you, who used to cry at getting your feet wet? Pelham's a luckier fellow than even I knew, and how I'll ever keep myself from grudging him his monstrous happiness goodness knows."

"Oh, Connor, can't you go on being serious till you have told me what you want me to do?"

"I am as serious as the grave, and don't know that I shall ever be anything else after the blow you have given me, Babette. What I want of you is only to go back to Castle Daly, and keep your brother there till the end of the summer. I can promise you that whatever happens, let the rising spread to whatever dimensions it may, neither you nor he, nor any one belonging to you, shall be in any danger. I want your brother there to secure the presence of one honest witness to the part Pelham takes; some one who will discriminate fairly between encouraging disaffection and his efforts to protect the poor wretches whom O'Roone, for his own purposes, is hunting from their homes. Of course the wretches are most of them with us.

How would they not be? But I believe your brother, even at such a time as this, will be just enough not to confuse common humanity with disaffection to Government. What with deaths and desertion, there is no one left of any standing in the neighbourhood, except ourselves and the O'Roones; and whichever way events fall out, Darby will have no other object but to scrape out some advantage to himself and some ill to his enemies through all."

"How I hate to think that I ever let him believe I tolerated his flattery."

"Well, Babette, when you count up your rejected lovers and flatterers, don't put me in the same list with Darby O'Rhone, that's all I ask. I don't say I've never tried to put a bit of the blarney over you for fun, but it was only the words that were froth; there was the real thing, strong and sound, underneath, though you don't choose to believe it. Hark! there's the music beginning again. Some one will come to look for you in a minute. I suppose I had better say good-bye; and you'll give me your hand to kiss again, I know."

"Won't you stay a little longer and see your aunt and uncle and cousins? They are all here to-night."

"Not for worlds—the only pleasant thought I'll ever get out of this evening will be the recollection of how skilfully I dodged them the hour and a half while I was waiting to get hold of you. I stood in the shade of that statue for at least ten minutes, and heard my uncle Charles entertain that old man there in a wig with his opinion of his Irish relations, and of Young Ireland, as represented by his nephew, Connor Daly."

"That tall gentleman is a Privy Councillor."

"Then he knows Uncle Charles's receipt for governing Ireland, and devoutly I hope he will get it acted upon, so as to give us a chance. You're not afraid, Babette. You know you'll be safe at Castle Daly whatever happens. I take it that you've promised me to go there."

"For Ellen's sake and your mother's."

"Yes, yes, that's understood; it's my mother of course you go to take care of. Even you can't get along without the blarney, you see, Babette, after all."

"Oh, Connor, when I've let you say and guess more than I shall dare to think of—when I have trusted you so——"

"And destroyed me altogether."

"You'll go to Paris to-morrow, and forget it all."

"I sha'n't; I shall go back to Dublin, and but for the thought of the fighting that's coming, I'd be ready to hang myself. However, there is that to look forward to, and D'Arcy—and I'll go in for it all now with a free heart. Now give me your hand quick, there's your brother coming to look for you." Connor pressed his lips fervently on the little hand held towards him, and then retreated into the furthest shade of the balcony, while Lesbia went forward to meet John in the window opening.

"No, dear John," she said sweetly; "I have not been down to supper yet; but I should like to go now with you, if you will be so good as to take me." Her floating white skirts nearly filled the window, but while she slipped her hand under his arm, John managed to glance round among the shrubs, and caught sight of a coat-tailed figure, leaning over the iron rails and gazing intently into the street. "One of Lesbia's numerous lovers." He was too much annoyed to risk losing his temper by further investigation. "She is an arrant coquette," he said to himself, with a sigh. "Bride is right; she cares only for conquest. We are bound to watch over her carefully, and not lose any chance that offers of giving her into respectable safe keeping. Marmaduke Pelham has certainly a peculiar method of love-making; but I suppose it is love he is making to her, and for the future I will be more careful not to show him how much he bores me."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"From you I have been absent in the Spring,
When prond pied April, dressed in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him;
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer story tell,
Nor from their proud lap pluck them where they grew."

SHAKESPEARE.

LESBIA'S first experience of the fact, that riches sometimes take the shape of fetters, holding their possessors back

from the attainment of their wishes, came to her as she lay in bed late on the morning after the ball, too tired to get up, and too restless to go to sleep again. The sunshine streaming through the closed shutters was reflected in long green rays from a little heap of trinkets on the dressing table, where she had wearily thrown them on undressing last night, and conspicuous, just in the level streak of light on the floor, lay one of the bouquets of shamrock from her lace dress, that had caught on an orange tree, and been torn away when she turned from Connor in the balcony. The whole scene rushed back on her memory, and she sat up in bed, bent her face down on her hands, and mentally acted it all over again, word by word. She had never, she thought, liked Connor half as well before as she did now, when he understood more of what lay at the bottom of her heart than anyone else in the whole world. Ah, yes, and Lesbia's tace, under the shelter of her clasped hands, and in the solitude of her own room, grew crimson at the thought. Ah, yes, more than that other person should ever know or would care to know. This secret alliance with Connor seemed a great gain, it as good as gave her a brother nearly of her own age, whom she need not be afraid of. A brother very unlike John—yet, how kind John had been, when he had put his arm round her, and spoken of returning to Connemara—what a curious new look had come into his eyes! Help to keep her last night's promise to Connor might be reckoned upon securely from that quarter, Lesbia felt sure, and smiled to herself, as all that was implied in John's willingness to aid her grew clear to her mind. John in love!—who would have thought it!—all his learning and the talents of which Bride was so proud, not having saved him from being as silly as herself. So far the way looked tolerably clear, but from this point difficulties in the shape of social duties began to start up. A week or two ago these same prospects would have been counted pleasures, now they appeared wretched mean hindrances, standing in the way of the one thing in the world she really cared to do:—engagements for balls and pleasure-parties, made with this and that grand acquaintance; proposed visits from dear friends; plans for constant meetings, and exchange of gaieties entered into with the Pelhams—and

behind all these lay the worst hindrance of all, a certain cold disapproving expression that was sure to come over Bride's face whenever either she or John ventured on any remark that had a latent design of proving the superiority of Castle Daly to any other residence. How could Lesbia approach her sister while she was in this mood, and propose such a startling plan as that they should give up their London house at the beginning of the season, and abandoning all engagements, go off suddenly to Connemara, where people had nothing to eat, and were dying by thousands of fever, and were expected soon to begin cutting each other's throats by way of change of suffering? There was not one good or even plausible reason to assign for such a proceeding, except that secret one which Lesbia thought her lips could no more speak out to Bride, than her shoulders could put forth wings to carry her across the sea. If only a plausible motive for breaking her intimacy with the Pelhams should arise, Bride might accept that as sufficient explanation for giving up the remaining gaieties of the season. It would certainly be awkward to be perpetually meeting people one had offended irrevocably. As these last thoughts crossed Lesbia's mind, she lifted up her head, put her tumbled hair away from her hot forehead, and rang the bell for her maid to dress her. Perhaps it might not be correct or maidenly to wish to receive an offer from a man she did not love and meant to refuse, just for the sake of affording her an excuse for leaving a place she was tired of, and going where her heart was (Lesbia acknowledged all this to herself); Bride would be shocked at such a design; but when one is a coward, and is driven into a corner, and above all, when the welfare of the person one secretly loves depends on one's movements, one cannot afford to be curious about expedients, but must be satisfied to adopt the readiest that comes to hand. And after all, this expedient was less objectionable than might be thought at first sight. Its only aim was to draw rather quickly to a conclusion a sham courtship, that had no heart in it on either side, and that yet had gone so far as to necessitate some sort of explanation to end it. A little manœuvring to bring the crisis at once was surely no great matter.

"Yes," Lesbia said to her maid, who was by this time plaiting her hair before the glass, "I will be dressed in my

habit, and go down to breakfast, ready for my ride. The Miss Pelhams always ride the morning after a ball, and I will send round a little note to beg them to call for me."

"And I will see that the note goes at once, Miss," the maid answered with a meaning simper that, reflected in the glass, caught Lesbia's eyes, and brought a flush of vexation and shame to her face, but did not induce her to alter her purpose.

John was puzzled and Bride triumphant at the increased inclination for the Pelhams' society Lesbia showed during the fortnight that succeeded the ball. She had always received the attentions of the family graciously, but now she appeared to have no interest in any engagement in which they were not included.

"Can you understand it, John?" Bride asked one evening when she caught her brother alone at the end of a day on which she had martyred herself by acting chaperone to Lesbia on a water party to Richmond with the Pelhams. "Can you understand the new attitude of affairs between Babette and Captain Pelham? She has abandoned all her former flirtations, and keeps close to the Pelhams wherever we go; and just as she is become more satisfactory, when the mother and sisters can hardly speak of her without tears of admiration and happiness in their eyes, the young man himself appears to be drawing back. Lady Pelham has been talking to me all the way home as if it were a settled thing; and yet I observed that though Captain Pelham walked by Lesbia's side, and went in the same boat, he hardly spoke a word to her; and when one of his sisters called on him to perform some little service, he gave her a look that was absolutely savage. It surely cannot be that her inclination has outrun his! It would never do to have our poor little beauty throwing herself at any man's head. I had rather a thousand times that she married Connor Daly."

"You may set your mind at ease; I think I can give you a satisfactory explanation of any strangeness there may have been in Marmaduke's manner to-day. He was in an awkward position. I can hardly imagine anything more uncomfortable than passing a day in company with a young lady to whom one has pledged oneself to make an offer at a specified time that is not just then."

"What do you mean? Has Captain Pelham been talking to you?"

"He joined me last night when I was leaving the House, after hearing Smith O'Brien speak, and late as it was, kept me pacing up and down before this door above an hour talking of his plans and hopes about Lesbia."

"Indeed! Were you satisfied? What did he say?"

"Talking is not his *forte*, as you know. The conference lasted an hour, certainly; but I fear the impression left on my mind at the end as to what had been actually said was somewhat hazy. I gathered, however, that his regiment is ordered immediately to Ireland; that his father wishes him to sell out, not to interrupt his courtship of Lesbia, but will sanction his remaining in the army till all prospect of disturbance is over, if he can bring his affairs in that quarter to a conclusion at once. The mother and sisters are not to know anything of the destination of the regiment at present, lest they should insist too strenuously on the selling out. He himself has what appears to me a singularly exaggerated idea of Lesbia's good sense, and is willing to leave the decision of his future course in her hands if she accepts him."

"But his feelings! Did it strike you, from what he said, that he was properly in love with her?"

"On that point I decline to give an opinion. His admiration of her good sense implies a considerable amount of infatuation; yet, on the other hand, he questioned me so anxiously on the likelihood of her having another attachment that I half suspected he was searching about for an excuse for not offering himself. Lesbia will find out what he means by a happy instinct, I trust. Such intricacies are beyond me."

"I wonder why he did not speak to her to-day."

"He is coming here to-morrow morning; I begged for the delay. I want to prepare the child—to warn her not to be hurried into a decision because people are expecting it of her."

"But if the decision is a wise one, why should not the expectations of older heads have due weight? I suspect that some of the happiest marriages are settled so. I hope I am not very worldly-minded, but when I think of the tranquil safe life that being taken into such a worthy

family as the Pelhams will secure to Lesbia, and compare it with the agitation and risk that an attachment to such a man as Connor Daly would inevitably bring, I can't help feeling that a little gentle persuasion may be allowable."

"How much you women think of safety, as if mere freedom from emotion were the great boon to be asked of life!—secure eating and drinking, and sleeping and dressing, a life of unbroken routine! Is that such a desirable fate in your eyes that you would force it on your friends?"

Bride came close and put her hands on his shoulders. "It's very cowardly, I acknowledge; but women don't reach my age without having suffered enough from excess of emotion to have learned to sum up nearly all that is desirable as to earthly feelings in the words 'rest and peace.' I suppose that is why the blessed invitation, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' sounds more inviting to women than to most men."

"I don't know about that. The rest of full satisfaction is a very different thing, remember, from the rest of acquiescence in mediocrity."

"I believe my wishes for Lesbia are faithless. Yet I think there must be some other ground for the difference of our opinions on this matter. I think you are a little perversely prejudiced against Captain Pelham. He is by no means such a fool as you are fond of making him out to be."

"Perhaps I am prejudiced."

"Don't be angry with me for asking, but did you not suspect at one time that he was in love with Ellen Daly?"

"Yes, I did."

"You despise him for transferring his affections from her to Lesbia."

"Not at all. I should only be too glad if I were certain that the transfer were genuine. I suppose some instinct enables one to divine what is in another person's mind when one has a strong feeling in common. Last night Captain Pelham sat next me in the Speaker's Gallery while the debate on the Treason-Felony Bill for Ireland was going on. He is not much given to politics, and I was disposed to wonder at the absorbed attention he gave to the speeches, till the fierce look in his eyes when the

advocates for extreme measures were on their feet made me understand that the writers of insurrectionary poems, whom the supporters of the bill were proposing to treat like felons, were to him all represented by the person of D'Arcy O'Donnell; that it was the man who had stolen away Ellen Daly's heart whom he hoped that night's work would render liable to transportation for life in punishment for chance words."

"And you, John—you were not reading your own feelings in his?"

"Well, no. I think I may say certainly not. I have no doubt I am just as jealous and revengeful as he is, but it would be a poor result of all one's struggles if at my age one could not see anything beyond the gratification of one's own feelings in a question of national interest, or if one had not got further than the savage instinct of wanting to secure a woman's affections by knocking one's rivals right and left out of the way."

"But you think Captain Pelham capable of cherishing such feelings while he is professing an attachment to poor little Lesbia?"

"Not of cherishing them, but of carrying them alive in his heart without knowing they are there. Lesbia has been thrown in his way, and he is allowing himself to be influenced, as you would have her be, by other people's expectations of him; that is why I wish to warn her."

"I will not say another word against it; but don't speak this evening. Let her have a good night's rest after her fatiguing day. That is her step in the passage. Let us be talking of last night's debate when she comes in. So you were in the House, were you, John, when Mr. Smith O'Brien openly advocated insurrection in Ireland?"

"Yes, and I hear yet the yells and hootings that greeted his wild words. If his were a possible enterprise—if by some strange chance it were to succeed, and the revolution in Ireland were to become an established fact inaugurating a new order of things—I can imagine some future historian of revolutions taking pleasure in describing the moment when he stood up, with hardly a sympathiser near him, to face the indignation and ridicule of the entire House, while he quietly and slowly expressed his belief in the right of Irishmen to fight for liberty, to live on their own soil, and

to possess themselves of arms at a moment when their rulers told them they were prepared to crush expression of opinion, not by argument, but by force."

"I do believe you were a sympathizing listener."

"No, I am not a believer in revolutions, and this will not be one. The present Government is strong enough and wise enough not to let it grow to heroic dimensions, and Smith O'Brien will lose his chance of being a hero, except to the very few people who can reverence high purposes when possibilities of accomplishment are wanting."

"But has the bill passed that will make the foolish rhapsodies of foolish young men like Connor Daly and D'Arcy O'Donnell matter for transportation for life?"

"If fools fling fire about, and we find sensible people's houses in danger of catching, their amusement must be stopped."

"Hush; don't say anything to awaken Lesbia's interest in the fire-flingers."

There was a pause in the talk when Lesbia, who had entered the room a few minutes before, approached the window recess, and John made it awkward by observing in rather a forced tone that he and Bride were discussing Mr. O'Brien's speech.

"Oh, they have come back to London from Paris, then," Lesbia exclaimed, and coloured scarlet at the end of her speech. Bride was preparing to ask whom she meant by *they*, when John broke up the conference. "I am going down stairs to write letters," he said. "You had better read the debate aloud to Lesbia, it will interest you both."

"Yes, dear Bride, do begin at once," Lesbia acquiesced eagerly. "Let us sit here in the window recess, and I shall be listening to your reading even if I do seem to be looking out of the window."

Bride grew absorbed in the debate as she read; but Lesbia heard very little, and understood less. Bride might have spared her precautions to save her little sister from hearing news at the end of the day, for Lesbia was not only well aware of Captain Pelham's intentions, but she had already, in the solitude of her own room, without consulting anyone, taken measures to prevent his carrying them into execution. She had written him a letter, and was now busy asking herself what John and Bride would

think of such a monstrous proceeding as refusing a man before he had asked her. It had all come of some too affectionate demonstrations from Lady Pelham while she and Lesbia had been pacing the avenue together before Ham House, and from a significant word that Marmaduke had let fall when he wished her good night. When she was shut up alone in her own room a full consciousness of the seriousness of the crisis she had brought upon herself seized her, and she was overwhelmed with shame and confusion. She had been anticipating this result of her own conduct, but now that it was close at hand it assumed a very different aspect from that it had worn far off. She did not know now whether she reproached herself most bitterly for her conduct to the Pelham family in encouraging them to waste hopes and build projects on her which she had all along meant to disappoint, or whether she was most self-humiliated for having drawn on her own head the slight of an insincere wooing. "She might not be worthy of so much love as Ellen Daly, on whom it seemed so much was bestowed," she said to herself; "but surely she was worth something more than to be married just for her money; no one caring for herself, or troubling themselves in the least to consider whether she should be happy or unhappy in the bonds that must be burdensome if love had had nothing to do with the binding of them. Surely there must be something better in store for her than that. Bride seemed to think Captain Pelham's sort of love good enough for her; but then Bride was blind, and did not know anything about love. But it was unjust to reflect on other people. She knew she had brought the insincere courtship on herself; and now that her eyes were open to the shame of it there was only one thing to be done—to draw back as far as possible now, and spare herself and her pretended lover the last step in the farce that would be mortification to them both.

She sprang from her seat with the resolute expression on her face that came there sometimes, and caused people to remark that after all there was a likeness between the sisters, and seating herself at her writing table she wrote rapidly.

"Please don't come to see me to-morrow as you said you would. You will think it very strange of me to say before

you have spoken that, whatever you were going to ask me would be of no use ; but I want us to remain good friends, and I think we can be so better if you don't come to me to-morrow. Try to get your mother and sisters to forgive me for not seeing them again before we leave London. I am going to ask John to take me back to Castle Daly next week. The sight of the hawthorn in flower in the Petersham fields to-day has inspired me with a longing for the country and a determination not to waste any more spring days in town. When I come back next winter we will talk about Connemara just as we used to do, and I shall still be your little friend whom you taught to ride.—
LESBIA MAYNARD."

She folded and directed her note without reading it over, and then ran down stairs and confided it to James Morris, the Dalys' former servant, whom she had adopted into great favour and brought with her to England, and on whose despatch and tact in any matter that specially concerned herself she could always rely.

While Bride read aloud she watched him across the square, and then awaited the result with misgivings gradually strengthening. Had she taken a very monstrous, out-of-the-way step? Would Bride consider that it disgraced her for ever? What would she have thought of it herself in the old days when she used to sit at her attic window looking over Aunt Joseph's little oyster-paved back garden, when the possibility of a baronet's son making her an offer would have seemed so very remote and so glorious? Was that James Morris crossing the square again? How could Bride expect her to be interested in all that confused tiresome stuff about liberty of the press, and laws of libel and treason-felony, when such very much more important questions were pending?

"How clear and pointed," Bride exclaimed; "this speech of Sir Robert Peel's would be deeply interesting even if we had no friends whom the proposed law is likely to affect. Do you think you have followed his argument, Lesbia? or would you like to go through it again?"

Lesbia turned round in dread of an explanation which Bride would expect her at least to try to understand, and was relieved by the sound of a ring at the servants' bell.

"Yes, dear; I think it is quite clear all that about treason

and felony being exactly the same thing in Ireland. I quite understand, but James Morris has just come in with a note for me, and I think if you don't object I will go and see what it is and be back in a few minutes."

Bride finished the debate to herself, and then as the light failed rang for tea and candles, and took up a book. "Do you know where Miss Lesbia is?" she asked of the servant who answered the bell. "Will you tell her I am waiting tea for her?"

"Miss Maynard is in the study with Mr. Thornley; she went there half an hour ago with a note that came for her, and said she did not wish to be disturbed," was the answer.

"Then you had better carry the tea down again," Bride said quietly, but she did not resume her book when the door closed. She sat with her hands clasped on its open pages and her head bowed down, feeling much as if a wave of bitter water had flowed over her. Why, if confidence was to be given—if an important decision affecting the child's life was to be discussed—must she be left out? She had been tenderer over Lesbia than ever John was, why did the little sister find him so much easier to talk to than herself? Was any fault in herself the cause, or was it that secret bond of a common liking, drawing them together and leaving her out, which was always showing itself to the peril of her peace? Bride had time to put the temptation to self-pity and bitterness quite away, and school herself to receive cordially whatever intelligence might be given before any interruption broke upon her reverie, for it was quite late in the evening when John and Lesbia entered the drawing-room together. Lesbia's eyelids were swollen with tears, but her lips were tremulous with little joyful smiles that broke out every minute as she hung over Bride wishing her good night and overwhelming her with playful caresses, that coming just then the elder sister, in spite of all her good resolutions, found a little trying. When she had left the room John took to pacing up and down before the windows, a sure sign that something was weighing on his mind. "Come and walk with me, Bride," he said at last, "I have something to tell you."

"I had rather hear it sitting, thank you," Bride said, a little drily. He came and leaned over her chair.

"But why? You used to say we never settled any

question satisfactorily unless we discussed it quarter-deck fashion—arm-in-arm.”

“That was when questions were discussed between us. When I have only to hear what is already decided I had rather sit.”

“Bride, you have a right to complain. I must begin by asking you to forgive me. Lesbia and I have settled a matter to-night without even recollecting that your wishes might point a different way from ours. We are selfish wretches, and it is very hard on you; forgive us.”

“No, no! forgive my moment’s ill-temper. You were quite right to conclude without asking that I shall be content with whatever pleases you and Lesbia. Tell me the decision you arrived at. I promise not to raise objections if I can possibly help it.”

“I have agreed (at Lesbia’s earnest request) to give up this house, and go back to Connemara as soon as you and she can be ready for the move.”

“You forget who is coming to-morrow, and on what errand. This sudden wish to leave London looks like pique. To-morrow’s explanation with Captain Pelham will bring a change of plans, you will see.”

“On the contrary, it is Marmaduke Pelham’s proposal that drives Lesbia from London. I could not make out all the details of her story, she was at times so very tearful; but the poor dear little thing blames herself bitterly for having misled the Pelhams. It seems that Marmaduke did make his intention plain to-day; and to save him the pain of a formal refusal, she bravely sent him a note this evening to forbid the call to-morrow. She brought me his answer. She wishes you to see it also; here it is.”

Bride took a sheet of note paper on which a few lines had been hastily scrawled and read:—

“A thousand thanks for yours. I was a fool and an ass for letting my sisters talk me into misunderstanding you for a moment. Forgive my presumption, and believe always in my high esteem and regard.—M. P.”

“A better note than I should have expected him to write under the circumstances. Of course this ends every expectation in that quarter, and I must give up my dream of seeing Lesbia installed at Abbots Thornley. Poor Lady Pelham, she and I shall always agree in thinking that it

would have been a good thing ; but, John, I cannot see the connection between this refusal and your determination to set off in hot haste to Ireland."

"Don't you ? In Lesbia's opinion and mine it is the only way out of our difficulty."

"But, my dear John, there is no difficulty. Why should we all run away from London because Lesbia has had an offer ? It will be the most ridiculous proceeding in the world, and will provoke everybody to talk about us."

"Will it ? Well, I am sorry you think so but I have promised Lesbia, and I really can't take back my word."

"You are a judicious guardian, truly. I don't wish to be ill-natured, John, but I must say just this. You had better consider well, for whatever comes of this hasty movement, the responsibility will be yours."

"As far as one ever is responsible for remote results, I am ready to take it. This evening's resolution may seem sudden to you, but I have long been tending towards it, and so I find has Lesbia. There would be consequences from our staying away as well as from our going, and I believe I am right in following the feeling that prompts me to dread those most of all."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Thrice happy she that is so well assur'd
Unto herself, and settled so in heart,
That neither will for better be allur'd
Ne fears to worse with any chance to start,
But like a steady ship doth strongly part
The raging waves and keeps her course aright ;
Ne ought for tempest doth from it depart,
Ne ought for fairer weather's false delight."

SPENSER.

"YES, bring them to me to the bedside, and let me hold them in my hand. I did not think I should live to see either again, tokens of how old the summer has grown, which I hardly thought to see begin. I expected to go so long before this that each pretty thing the season brings seems a special indulgence to me that I must make much of."

It was a warm July day, towards the end of the month,

and Ellen had just entered Anne O'Flaherty's sick-room, carrying in her hand a purple and orange potato flower and a full ear of barley in its first stage of changing from green to pale yellow. She came to her cousin's bedside, and put the stalks between the wasted fingers that lay almost powerless upon the counterpane, and stooped to kiss the face where all the remaining life seemed to be concentrated, looking eagerly and lovingly still out of her hollow, glittering eyes.

"I gathered the barley ear from that field of Farmer Joice's on the hillside you persuaded him to break up for tillage two years ago, and the potato flower is from Widow O'Reilly's garden in the hollow. Her plot looks well; there is no sign of the blight there yet, and the corn is whitening already."

The words were spoken plainly and meaningly, and an anxious look stole into Anne's eyes. Great care had been taken to keep disturbing tidings from the sick-room, where now for many weeks she had been lying patiently waiting for the end; but her nurses had not been able to shut out a certain uneasy expectation of what might be expected to follow the gathering of the harvest from penetrating even to her. By many people in Ireland that year the first golden grain was looked for as a signal of preparation for a reaping that would not end in the piling of peaceful corn sheaves, and in gathering food for the year; and in spite of all precautions to hide it from her, Anne knew this well.

"Does Farmer Joice think we shall have an early harvest?" she asked again.

"We can hardly tell yet," Ellen said soothingly. "And meanwhile here is a bright warm day, and you are easier; and there was a letter from Connor last night, speaking of coming home soon, and Widow O'Reilly has dug up a dish of potatoes from a bed she sowed with the new seed you got from America, and they look so well she is crying for joy over them."

Anne's face brightened. "You do well to keep me looking at the little daily events close at hand. What have I to do with anything further off? Each day that finds and leaves me here is an unexpected gift."

"You can feel it so?" Ellen asked wistfully. "In spite

of all the pain and weariness. you are not in a hurry to have done with us and our troubles? ”

“ I don’t think I ever shall have done with them,” Anne said, smiling. “ I don’t suppose it will make so much difference to me as to you, when the veil between me and the unseen world is quite withdrawn. I have come so near I can almost feel and see the air and light from the other side streaming through, and whatever glorious new conditions the being there may bring, I can’t believe that less love or care for those I leave behind will be any part of the result.”

“ But we shall cease to have proofs of the love and care.”

“ And so I am quite content to be left on the threshold during these long waiting weeks, ‘ waiting for the harvest ’ ; it may bring peace and plenty in spite of all our fears, and by the time I have passed out of sight and hearing, you may not want my sick-bed to sit beside.”

“ I shall always want it.”

“ Poor child ! It’s you that I’m sorry for. Rest is coming to me, and the burden of all will fall on your shoulders. You understand what I mean, don’t you ? ”

“ Not quite.”

“ That you will have to take my place here, altogether ”—

“ Oh ! Anne ; but Connor.”

“ Connor knows ; he has chosen his part. I could not trust the lives and interests of my people to him in his present frame of mind. Whatever the next two or three months may bring—wherever he may be when they are over—I am afraid he will have unfitted himself for ever doing any useful work in Ireland again.”

“ Anne, I believe I am at heart almost as great a rebel as Connor. I can’t bear that he should be disinherited for doing what, if I had been his brother instead of his sister, I should probably have taken part in.”

“ It is a trust, not a possession, I leave with you, dear, and I always meant to take the one of you most fitted for it. You must let me rejoice that I can put it confidently into your hands—that you have not cut yourself off from following me. There was a sorrowful time last spring when I feared you would so cut yourself off, and leave me no free person of my own blood to whom I could give up my work.”

"You mean the time when Cousin D'Arcy stayed with us. I did not believe you knew what was passing among us, or that if I had consented to what he wished it would have made you unhappy. Why did not you warn me?"

"I did not want to influence you unduly. I remembered that I had been young myself, and how in those days tones of voice like his and looks like his affected me. Now that it is all over I should like to know why you sent him away, and how you escaped his influence at the time. I thought it was all over with you, and that my poor Good People's Hollow people had lost you quite, for I could not have given them the wife of a rebel leader for their mistress."

"I should like to tell you all since you have divined so much; and perhaps you will be able to help me to understand myself better than I do now. You know that mamma and Pelham took to D'Arcy at once when he came to stay with us at Eagle's Edge after his visit to you. They felt as I did—that it was almost like having papa again in the house. But though he fascinated us all, it was only to me that he opened out on the subject he really came for. At first his enthusiasm took as great a hold on me as it has done on Connor; and when he talked about his hopes and plans I was dazzled, and could not help believing in them and giving him the fullest sympathy. But later, when he began to say words to me about the new strength my sympathy gave, and what I might be to him and the cause if I could love him, I was startled and distressed. I thought I ought to feel honoured and happy, and I hated myself sometimes for shrinking back, calling myself half-hearted, and incapable of giving the devotion to a cause or a person that more unselfish women were giving. I had almost worked myself up to believe that my whole heart was with the cause and with him when that troubled time came of Pelham's quarrel with Darby O'Roone and the duel. I did not blame either Pelham or D'Arcy for the part they took, but I found that my thoughts flew off at once to another friend of Pelham's, whose influence, if he had been near, would have been very differently exercised. D'Arcy had to leave Connemara early in the next day, and I had promised to give him an answer before he left. We spent the last day

here. You were very unwell, and I passed the greater part of that night by your bedside. Once, in opening a drawer to find something you wanted, I caught sight of a letter from Bride Thornley, which some months before you had taken from me lest I should make myself unhappy by reading it again. I was seized with a great desire to read it, and when you were asleep I took it to the hearth-rug, and spelt it out by firelight just as I had done on the evening I received it. I don't know what it did to me, but as I read the words, every one of which I remembered perfectly, I felt as if scales fell from my eyes, and I understood myself and what I really cared for at last. I discovered that a very different image from D'Arcy's had come into my heart and become impressed on all my thoughts; that it was quite another sort of approval than his I really coveted. When I was a child, I never could be content unless mamma was satisfied with me. Even when I had your good word and papa's, hers seemed to be the only praise worth struggling for because it was so deliberately and calmly given."

"Ah! I see it is the strong English sense and high standard of duty you turn to and trust beyond the warm Irish impulse, after all."

"I have not vexed you, Anne?"

"No, darling, no, for it is that I've come round to prefer myself and trust in to help you to carry out all the plans I have failed to perfect, and to correct all my mistakes here."

"I shall have the help in one way, but, Anne, you must not expect more than can really be. Last summer, on the bridge out there, I made my decision for life, and I know quite well that he will never ask me to alter it. I spoke too angrily and vehemently for anything further ever to be said."

"Well, dear, it may be so, I agree with you, that John Thornley is not a man to get over a repulse easily, but I suppose you often meet now that he and his sisters have come back to live at Castle Daly?"

"Not often. Miss Thornley, who used to come to Eagle's Edge sometimes, left the Castle three weeks ago to stay with some friend in England, and the other two have not time, or perhaps inclination, to pay visits to us. We meet

at the schools and the public kitchens, and sometimes in the cabins, and Lesbia makes a great fuss over me; but, indeed, Anne, whatever coldness there is, is not my fault. I wonder at myself sometimes for being able to talk and consult with Mr. Thornley as freely as if last summer had never been, and he is, with me, just like anybody else, except that I know there is nothing that I can suggest or ask that will not be contrived and brought about with him there. I think Pelham is the one that keeps up the distance between us. He can't forget that Darby O'Roone goes about accusing him everywhere of having forced a duel upon him for the express purpose of currying favour with the heiress; and the accusation is so galling to Pelham that he can't do enough to show he does not expect any gratitude for his championship. He sometimes makes himself so wooden and dignified when Lesbia is talking to him, and looking up with just the coaxing expression in her eyes we used to admire at Whitecliffe, that I should be dreadfully sorry for her if I did not see that she and her brother are so happy together, that I hardly think she can care much for anything else."

"And the elder sister has left Castle Daly; that accounts for my not having seen her for so long."

"You were very ill the week before she left, and Dr. Lynch would not hear of her coming to say good-bye."

"It would have been the last good-bye. I must not expect many more—perhaps not another such day of ease as this; it is a breathing time given me to say last words and make up last accounts. I wish I could bring all my friends round to shake hands and say good-bye to-day."

"I wish Connor were here."

"Poor fellow! he has not seen me for so long my wasted face would be a shock to him; but if the Thornleys call I should like them to be brought in here. I might not be able to say much, but I should look into their faces once again and shake hands."

Anne's strength had ebbed again, and was so small, when in the hot afternoon horses' hoofs were heard crossing the bridge that Ellen came to the bedside to persuade her against receiving visitors that day, but Anne was resolute. "Just for a moment," she pleaded, "I may not have another chance; bring little Lesbia in, too. I want to

have a vision of both their faces to carry away with me. I should like to strengthen the links between myself and them by just a word or two more."

Ellen ran down stairs to bring the guests to Anne's room, and met John and Lesbia mounting the steps of the house.

"Is this change they speak of better or worse?" John asked, anxiously.

It was the first time he and Ellen had met at the Hollow since last summer; but both were too full of thoughts of Anne for embarrassing recollections.

"It is freedom from pain for the present, possibly for a week or so, Dr. Lynch thinks," Ellen answered, "and she has set her heart on making use of the time to see her friends. Don't be afraid, Babette, her face is very pale and thin, but there is no expression of pain on it now, and she talks and smiles to-day quite like her old self."

So John thought when he entered the room and found Anne half-sitting up in bed, with both hands outstretched towards him, and the eager light of welcome on her face with which she was wont to receive favoured guests.

"I am glad it is once more," she said, "one more 'kindly welcome' to Good People's Hollow from me to you. Set it against other things in your thoughts of the place; and now take a seat by me, for I have something particular to say to you."

If John hoped from the significance with which the kindly welcome had been spoken that what was coming would have reference to his own concerns he was mistaken. Ellen and Lesbia withdrew to the window, out of hearing of Anne's low tones; but the confidences slowly breathed out referred only to her wishes about her funeral. There must be a wake, of course, and people would flock from all parts of the neighbourhood; and Anne feared, if it should occur about harvest-time, while this uneasy expectation of disturbance lasted, that the assembling of so many people together might be made a pretext for violence by one side or the other. "I trust to you and to Pelham to watch," she said; "if any of my people were to get into trouble while I was lying here dead, I think it would disturb me so that I must get up out of my coffin and come back. If they will not listen to anyone else, you must bring Ellen to speak to them, and tell them to go

home peaceably for the love of God and me. They will understand and obey her. You are thinking that after a life-time of working among them I ought to have brought them to a better state than to need such appeals, and I don't say it is not so; but I have governed them to the best of my knowledge, and at least their hearts are warm towards each other, and reverent towards God; and there are places, perhaps, where so much as that can't be said of the lowest people."

Murdock Malachy had taken Mr. Thornley's and Lesbia's horses round to the stables, and while they were being brought back Ellen and John and Lesbia walked in the garden at the back of the house, avoiding the bridge by tacit consent. John could speak of no one but Anne. Her few last words had touched him deeply. "It is very uncommon," he said, "to meet with a woman in whom care for the general good is so strong, that to the last it overpowers all personal feeling, and keeps the mind on the alert, foreseeing for others to the very verge of life. She is a born queen."

"Yes," Ellen said, "suffering as she is, she would like to stay to help us through the dark times that are coming after the harvest. She said just now she was willing to wait here till the storm burst, and I think I feel more grateful to her for that, than for all the help she has given me in her life. It has been a habit with me ever since I can remember to fly to Anne whenever there was trouble hanging over Connor. To fear for him, with her away, would be more than I could bear."

"Could not you persuade him, by an appeal to his affection for her and you, to keep out of trouble in this crisis, and spare a pang to her last days? I fear he has done much to commit himself; still, if he would go abroad, or visit your uncle Pelham in England till the next month is over, all might be well. I had letters this morning which determined me to speak of this to-day. He would listen to you, perhaps, and to her speaking from her death-bed, when no other remonstrance would take effect."

Ellen's face flushed as she answered quickly, "Could you, if you were in Connor's place, listen to any appeal, from a dying bed even, that called on you to desert your friends in the moment of danger; to go back from all your

professions because the time had come when it cost you something to act on them? Have I a right—has even Anne a right—to ask him to be a coward and a traitor? I had rather break my heart over him in prison, or in his grave.”

“I look on Connor rather as a victim than as a responsible partisan,” John answered quietly. “He has been led, through the vehemence of his friendships, to take part in measures he has not sufficient experience to judge sanely. I want to save him from suffering the full, dire consequences of his friends’ mistakes. Since it is now plain to all competent judges that the talked-of rising will simply be an act of madness in all who take part in it, I can’t imagine why you should shrink from persuading him not to fulfil such Herod’s vows.”

“The madness is not so plain to him or to me. If I thought I could persuade Connor to keep out of danger when the rest of them are in it, I might perhaps be tempted to try. It would save us—ah, you don’t know what agony, to know that he was safe, hiding under Uncle Pelham’s wing while things were happening in Ireland; but I don’t know that we should gain much in reality. When it was all over, when his friends had perhaps triumphed, or more likely been crushed, it would not be Connor Daly who would come back to us from the safe hiding-place; we should never see anything more of *him* with the warm heart and high spirit: for all there would be left of him, I think he might as well have made his grave with his friends, or been sent among felons across the sea, as Mr. Mitchell is going now.”

John observed the glow that came into Ellen’s fair cheek as she spoke, and the light in her eyes, and put down the strong emotion she evinced to a wrong cause. “Yes,” he said to himself, “it is plain enough where her heart is; nothing but love could so twist her vision as to make her see those men in a heroic light, and almost glory in the thought of her brother falling a sacrifice to his fidelity to them. Poor child! there is a terrible awakening before her, a long dreary heart-ache. How can I help her? How shall I be able to stand by and see her suffer with all that power of suffering she has, for another man’s sake?”

"One moment more," he said aloud to Ellen; for just then Murdock's voice, calling a gossoon to run round to the back of the house and tell the lady and gentleman that their horses were dead bated with the fatigue of standing still waiting so long—"One moment! If you can't interfere, and think Connor must be left to his fate now, at least let us do what we can to save Peckham from being implicated, and to keep the knowledge of his danger from your mother as long as possible. Have you any reason to expect a visit from Connor at this time?"

"Yes; he said in his last letter that we might see him soon."

"That is what I feared, and what you must do all you can to prevent. I have reason to know that measures are being taken to oblige the disaffected club-leaders to declare themselves sooner than they intended. They will not be allowed to wait till after the harvest. In another day or two they will either be arrested or have fled, or they will be defending themselves in arms. Already they are aware of this, and the chief members of the Dublin clubs are dispersing about the country to sound the disposition of the people and prepare for a rising. Don't let Connor come here. In a few hours this district will be proclaimed, and power placed in the hands of magistrates—of whom, remember, O'Roone is one—to arrest suspected rebels. Connor will be watched from the moment he enters the neighbourhood. Keep him in Dublin, where he may escape notice among others more important. There is, I think, a good hope that the crisis may pass over with the arrest and punishment of a few conspicuous offenders, and that there will be no popular rising at all."

"You think, after all that has been said and written, the people will not fight—that they will give up their leaders? Oh! no; I cannot believe it."

The mingled incredulity and disappointment in the tone provoked a smile from John Thornley.

"You are a true Irishwoman," he said; "you can't disabuse yourself of the idea that some good is to be got by fighting, whatever the odds may be. Yet I think your reason will tell you that the peaceful solution is the best chance of escape from ruin your friends have."

"For Connor, yes; and indeed I don't want the fighting to come. I only can't believe that so much——"

"Bluster!"

"No, no; don't say that—so much strong feeling and hope as have possessed some will end in what would be to them such utter despair. But I will do all I can to keep Connor in Dublin for a week longer. Would that do?"

"I quite believe it would—Connor, and if possible your cousin, Mr. O'Donnell."

"D'Arcy! But how would that be possible? He is one of the leaders," Ellen answered, a little proudly. "If anyone is to suffer for what has been written and attempted this year, I don't believe he would choose to be left out."

"It would be a pity," John answered gravely, "for a man of his powers to throw away all the chances of life at twenty-three on such a poor, ill-judged, ill-planned attempt as this will prove to be. I speak as a fellow literary man. Let him reserve himself for work he is fitted for. There are plenty of fools and ruffians to fling themselves on bayonets in a mad impulse of savage pugnacity; he is made for something better than that."

"For words instead of deeds? For inciting the ruffians to fling away their lives, and stealing off while they do it? Do you mean to call that better?"

"What I mean to say is, that I think, if I were he, with the prospect of happiness that appears to be before him, I should not throw away my chances on such a mad scheme as this; but Murdock is calling again—we must go."

"I will write to Connor to-night," Ellen said, holding out her hand. "Thank you for warning us. D'Arcy, too, will be grateful to you for your care for his fate, though he will not take a word of your advice. He has often heard of you from us."

A cloud passed over John's face, and he withdrew his hand rather coldly from the cordial clasp Ellen would have given. The vision he conjured up of Ellen and D'Arcy discussing his character together was not pleasant, and he half regretted the generous impulse that led him to say words, at some cost of pain to himself, that seemed likely to have so little result.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"King Robert came too late ;
Long, long may Erin mourn,
Famine's rage and dreadful fate
Forbade her Bannockburn."

LAMENT FOR EDWARD BRUCE.

ELLEN mounted the stairs to Anne's room with a much less tranquil mind than she had carried in coming down. The prospect of danger to Connor five or six weeks hence was a different thing from the thought of his being in peril now, perhaps at this hour ; and yet, so completely was she imbued with his spirit, that she could not help a vague feeling of exhilaration stealing in among her fears. She had heard the question asked so often in eloquent speech or verse, "Has the time come?" that the thought "It has come, then, at last," sent a thrill through her nerves. She hardly asked herself "The time for what?" The glowing words and burning verse had raised a mist before her, through which she could only see that something was to be nobly dared for Ireland, and the consequences lay beyond, hidden by the halo that appeared to surround the effort. Anne was asleep when she re-entered the room, so she took her writing-case to a table in the window, to begin her letter. The writing it took a long time, for she had to frame her sentences cautiously, so as to appeal to considerations most likely to weigh with Connor, and yet not startle him by seeming to ask too much. She thought it better to avoid any allusion to Mr. Thornley, as Connor would think of him only as a cunning enemy to the cause, and might even in his vanity consider his cautions a stratagem to deprive the movement of his valuable presence and aid at its most critical moment. As she wrote, fear and sickening anxiety for Connor predominated, and put out the will-o'-the-wisp light of excitement, and she was often obliged to lay aside her pen and calm herself by looking over the quiet valley. How many mothers and sisters and friends might there not be throughout Ireland employed just then like herself, scheming with sick hearts to hold back their dearest from rushing on destruction ; or, more painfully yet, battling within themselves between

the martyr spirit that urged them on to let go, and the cry of the heart that bade them hold back. Oh, if the right and the wrong were only quite clear to her mind, how much easier action would be! If she could feel sure that this effort about to be made for restoring nationality to Ireland was not only hopeless, but wrong. That it was hopeless was not, she thought, enough to urge against it; so many apparently hopeless causes had been gained in the end. Had not Gideon gone out to victory with three hundred chosen men, and Tell with three; and had not Bruce landed with his friend, the two of them on the shore at Arran over there, to save Scotland from wearing that Nessus garment of shame, the consciousness of being a conquered country, which clung to Ireland and eat into her vitals yet? It was not reason enough to urge for holding back that the cause was hopeless. But, might it not be true that the days were past when such struggles had the help of Heaven; that the time for smiting with the sword had gone by, and bloodless moral victories were those alone on which Heaven smiles now? And then on Ellen's memory there rose a vision of a scene she had witnessed in her childhood, when her father had taken her to Cliefden to hear Daniel O'Connell harangue a countless multitude gathered on the green hill-sides, and along the shores of the blue fiord that there indents the coast, on his favourite scheme of raising Ireland to the rank of an independent nation again, through the majestic force of its people's united will, peacefully expressed. She saw again the genial, beaming, grand face of the speaker raised above the throng, the thousand faces turned one way, all with an intent, sympathetic look upon them; she heard the deep, acquiescing shout that greeted every pause in his speech. Was it all wasted feeling, wasted eloquence? Were the thousands of hearts that had all but attained the fever-heat of enthusiasm that moulds an inspired nation to sink back into units again, unable to act on the impulses that moved them most deeply? *That* seemed to Ellen, just then, the saddest tragedy of all—a worse death than any other dying. To weave ropes of sand eternally that bind nothing; to struggle and rage unceasingly and bring forth nothing! Were not Connor and his friends perhaps right to try to create some spark of life, if it were only the

galvanic spark that moves a corpse? Or was it better to bow meekly before the inevitable, trusting to the guiding hand of God, and to confidence inspired by faith in Him, that no unselfish effort shall fail utterly, but that even in dying it shall find a new body prepared for it, a fruit unlooked for, something different from and beyond what the flower promised? In the far future Ireland's past struggles and woes, and those of other nations as ill-fated, might have some such unforeseen solution—in the grand gathering up times, when not nationality, but something larger and higher, shall be the bond uniting the peoples of the earth together—it may be that the nations and races who have suffered most and drained the cup of humiliation to the dregs will be found (having learned most from suffering) capable of the grandest work for the whole, and will be preferred to the highest places, and crowned with crowns of dominion. Then would the names of those who from afar had foreseen the glory, but never entered into it, who had refused to give up hope, who had worshipped at the cradle of worth, be remembered again, and honoured and worn in all the glad hearts.

It was late when the letter was finished, and Ellen resolved not to trust it in the hands of Malachy, who usually took the letters from Good People's Hollow to meet the post-car that passed in the early morning on the road between Westport and Ballyowen.

She believed him quite capable, in the case of a letter from Connor, of exercising a right of investigation, and speeding or retarding its despatch, according to his own approval of the contents. She had meant to return to Eagle's Edge early on the next day, and as she could reach the point where Murdock usually intercepted the car by making a circuit of a few miles on her way home, she resolved to be her own letter-carrier, and took leave of Anne when she wished her good night.

During the summer of Miss O'Flaherty's illness, Ellen had been in the habit of taking the long walk between Eagle's Edge and the Hollow at almost all hours of the day, from early morning till late evening; she knew the shortest cuts across the mountains, and had her favourite resting-places under sheltering rocks by the side of lonely mountain tarns; or in ferny nooks & the valleys fragrant with

woodbine, when the sunshine lay hot on the hill-sides, and the shaded hollows were the most inviting. The divergence from her usual route to meet the car would prolong her walk by an hour or so, and she determined to set out very early before any of the household were up. It was the dim grey hour before sunrise when she stole softly down the staircase with her letter and the key of the front door in her hand, and she felt some surprise at perceiving she was not the earliest riser. There were sounds of some one stirring down stairs, and when she had let herself out of the house she came upon Murdock Malachy limping round the corner from the back premises. He started at sight of her, and seemed disposed to slink away without his customary "Top of the morning to ye, Miss Eileen," but thinking better of it, he ran after her and caught her up as she was crossing the bridge.

"It's early ye're setting out for yer walk this morning, Miss Eileen dear," he said, looking into her face wistfully; "the paths up the mountains are bad for such feet as yours, wid the dew thick on them. Ye'd a dale better go back to the house and wait an hour till the sun's up. The girls are setting to work to make hot bread for breakfast this morning, and fit to break their hearts they'll be if there's no one to ate it, such a sin as it is to waste the good food this year."

"But I must go home, Murdock. I intend to be at Eagle's Edge long before breakfast-time to superintend the bread-making for my mother's breakfast. You'll easily find somebody to eat my share of the Indian meal-cakes you have learned to make so well at the Hollow."

"The path across Lac-y-Core is the road ye're taking this morning, Miss Eileen, then, if you must go; you'll find it the driest and most convanient by a long way."

"Thank you, Murdock. I've come so often to the Hollow on foot lately that there's little chance of my losing my way, whichever path across the mountains I take."

He did not seem satisfied, she thought, and when she had crossed the valley and was half-way up the steep road that led out of Anne's domain, she looked back and saw him still leaning with his elbows on the bridge-rail looking after her. The mist lay thick in the Hollow, but a

little group of cabins on the hill-side had caught the first rays of the rising sun, and stood out distinct against the sky, and Ellen saw through the low doors, one, two, three, four figures of men creeping out. She stood still to watch them. They did not disperse into their little patches of garden ground on the slope of the hill or to the pastures where the cows were feeding. They turned to the mountains and began to climb, taking the direction she herself was following, and when she had reached the highest point of the path, and began to descend towards the main road, looking down she saw another frieze-coated figure striding along through the mist before her. Early as it was there was an unusual stir, as if others besides herself had found the summer night too long, and were impelled to be beforehand in meeting what the day was bringing. Ellen was not afraid to meet any of these people. No one would hurt her on these lonely mountain sides, but the sense of expectation to which their alertness testified, excited her and made her press eagerly on her way, longing to have despatched her letter and to be at home. She did not pause to rest till she was close upon the hamlet where the post-car stopped to change horses, and there she discovered that she was considerably more than an hour too early, and must find a convenient place to wait in till the car appeared. The road along which she was walking skirted the side of a hill, at whose foot the little hamlet lay, and, looking upwards, Ellen saw a peat pile conveniently placed for shelter, with one or two fallen sods at its base, arranged so as to make a comfortable arm-chair to rest in. She took off her bonnet and drew her cloak over her head, when she had established herself in this nook, for the morning air was chilly still. The mountain tops were beginning to grow red in the sunlight, but the mist lay in long curling wreaths along their sides and brooded over the valley. From where Ellen sat it was like looking down into a sea of moving quicksilver, which, swaying and parting now and again, showed glimpses of what lay beneath—the church spire, with its vane catching the sunbeam, the straggling street of cabins, many of them deserted and roofless now, the small wayside inn where the car stopped. The churchyard crowded with graves and sloping up the hill-side to the edge of the

road, was the object nearest Ellen and the one that looked most real. She amused herself by making out the boundary lines of its inclosure, and observing how, minute by minute, as the sun rose higher and the mist rolled back, the shapes of the crosses and head-stones by the graves grew clearer. Was it a funeral that was going on there below at this time of day? It was hardly possible, and yet it was clear that some ceremony was being enacted in that least-frequented corner by the north wall just below her feet. There was a group of figures moving, and some of them appeared to be stooping over an open grave. Were they mourners, or what had drawn that little band of frieze-coated men together in the misty morning twilight? Ellen thrust herself further under the shelter of the peat wall, and her heart almost ceased beating with horror as her eyes, grown accustomed to the scene, made out more and more clearly what was going on below. Dreadful stories she had heard of murders of supposed spies by their comrades in secret lodges, and of their subsequent interment, recurred to her mind, and made her long to hide her eyes, even while anxiety compelled her to look. They were certainly digging a grave, those two men only a yard or two below her, hastily and yet cautiously. The surface had been carefully pared away and laid in sods ready to be restored to its place, and as the trench momentarily grew wider and deeper, the bystanders began to crowd round the edge, and push eager faces forward over each other's shoulders to look in.

That was Murdock Malachy's face thrust between the arms of the diggers. What a curious expression there was on it, and on those of the other men round—flushed with joyful expectation, and yet fierce, with staring eyes that seemed longing for some dearly-loved sight long withheld! It would be terrible to think that such smiles could come on faces that had recently seen blood shed. At last there was a dull ring, as if the spade had struck some harder substance than clay. A murmur rose among the bystanders, low but intense—"Glory be to God, they're there, boys! A moment longer and we'll have them betwixt our fingers again. Pass the rope down, and hurry, in the name of God." The two men who had been digging now jumped into the pit. A few more strokes

and they were heaving something up which eager hands from above clutched. Ellen saw it distinctly ; it was a coffin, rude and roughly put together, like many that had been used in the two black years of constant funerals they had passed through, but unmistakably a coffin ; and when it had been placed on the ground, and a dozen hands at least were tugging at its sides and top to tear it asunder, a feeling of deadly sickness came over her, and she let her head sink on her knees, not daring to see further. What fearful fierce orgie was she witnessing ? The sound of voices speaking in indifferent tones, and the words that reached her ears, reassured her by degrees.

“Look out for your own, boys ; and if there are any whose spalpeens of owners ain’t here to claim them, let the captain say who’s to have the handling of them.” “The top of the morning to the beauties ; see the glint of the sun on them.” “Long life to them ; now we’ve given them a happy resurrection, may they soon have a bloody baptism, and may they niver rest in pace again till they’ve done their work.” “Toss the ould planks back into the hole, boys ; and hurry to cover them up, for the day is upon us, and it’s far enough from this we’ll be with these by our sides before night.”

The meaning of the whole scene dawned on Ellen at the last words, and she sat up courageously and bent from her hiding-place to witness the end. The diggers, aided by many helpers, were now rapidly filling in the hole and replacing the sods on its surface ; and on the ground where the coffin had lately stood lay a little pile of arms—pikes, guns, and muskets—with here and there an old sword whose handle, in spite of rust, glittered in the morning sun. When the last sod was replaced, two men who had hitherto stood on the outskirts of the crowd came a little forward, and standing on the refilled grave, began to hand out the arms. Their backs were turned to Ellen, but though no word was spoken while the distribution lasted, she knew perfectly well who they were. The taller of the two picked up the last of the muskets, stepped to the front, and spoke a few words in a low voice, distinct enough, however, for Ellen to distinguish every word :—

“Boys—brothers, the sun is up and we must disperse

for a few more hours of silence and hiding; a few hours more and then we'll meet again, please God, never to part till our work is done. We're fewer this morning than I thought we should be; but what of that? we feel like men now with arms in our hands. Hundreds all over Ireland are doing this hour what we have done, and in a little while we'll all be together—all the brave, true men that famine and oppression have left in the land. If our hearts are one, few or many, we'll be enough for what we have to do, boys. Now go home quietly, for you have each a treasure beyond price to guard—the weapon with which you are to strike for your country. We must not shout, but we'll stand silent together for a moment; and vow all of us low in our hearts, with this morning's sunlight on our heads, that we'll never cease the struggle till the night of oppression and wrong in Ireland is past, and the daylight of liberty bright over our land."

A dead silence, that yet seemed to Ellen to throb with emotion, followed when the eloquent voice ceased, and then there was a shuffling of feet and steps moving away in different directions, and in a few seconds more the churchyard was deserted by all but the two young men who had last spoken. These two, when the frieze-coated figures had all disappeared, passed through a gate of the churchyard that opened on the hill-side path, and stood for a few minutes talking together directly under Ellen's hiding-place.

"A mere handful of men," she heard Connor's voice say; "hardly worth the risk of our coming here to look them up. We had better have gone at once to join the main body in the South."

"If we only knew that by this time there is a main body," answered D'Arcy O'Donnel, in a desponding tone that struck Ellen in contrast with the hopeful words he had so lately spoken.

"You are not doubting it, surely?"

"No, no; but don't you feel a deadness? If things were going according to our hopes, I fancy we should feel it even here and now. There would be a thrill in the air all over Ireland, instead of this blank, that somehow, struggle against it as I will, weighs on me. The spirit

of this district has changed since we were here last—only that handful!”

“But the notice has been so short. The few we have seen will whisper it about that we are here, and you will see what a gathering there will be at Dennis Malachy’s old still to-night.”

“Your henchman, Murdock, seems dispirited, however.”

“Yes, and I’m sorry to see it, for he’s a shrewd fellow. He says it’s John Thornley’s influence and Miss Maynard’s money and kindness that have worked the change. O’Roone was harrying the boys into a ripe state for rebellion. I wish I had spared my precious journey to London, and never sent that little witch, Miss Lesbia, to lull them into ignominious prosperity and content.”

“My despair is to think that such a slight relaxation of misery should be enough to lull them into inaction. If it should be the same story everywhere—but we at least must not lose heart. Now for disposing of the next twelve hours. Shall we go at once to our quarters in the old still, or do you hold to your intention of hanging about Eagle’s Edge for the chance of a sight of Ellen? You said something of it.”

“In a sentimental mood. If I thought I could have a word with Ellen.”

“Here, Connor dear, here!” and letting the cloak fall from her head, Ellen stepped down from her hiding-place on to the path and threw her arms round Connor’s neck. “I have been watching you all the time from that seat under the peat cone on the hill,” she said, in answer to their looks of dumb astonishment. “I left the Hollow before daybreak to walk home, meaning to catch the mail-cart here, and post a letter to forbid your coming home, you wicked, dangerous conspirators, and fate has turned me into a secret spy and witness of your treason. I have only to go straight to Mr. Thornley, or old O’Roone, and inform against you, to have you both put out of the way of further harm; safe in prison for six months.”

“We’ll trust her, won’t we, D’Arcy?” cried Connor joyfully. “May we never have a spy among us falsier to the cause; but to think of your being there, and my first wish this morning granted before it was well out of my mouth. If that’s not a good omen for the enterprise,

D'Arcy, I don't know what we'll want to heighten our hopes."

"Or give us something better," said D'Arcy, who had not yet spoken; "when first and last wishes are granted, one is ready for whatever comes." Ellen shook hands with him in silence. The glance she had into his face told her that the last six months had altered him greatly. The bright enthusiastic countenance that had made such an impression on Connor when first seen a year ago was much worn now, and lined with anxious thought and mental suffering, young as it was. There was the same resolution upon it, but no longer the inspired look of hope; a degree of disappointment and awakening had evidently come to him, not sufficient, unhappily, to turn him from his purposes, but to send him forward with the determination of a man bound by honour to a desperate attempt rather than with the expectation of victory that is such an element in success. Ellen's heart was almost as full of pity for him as of anxiety for Connor, whose lighter nature sent him into danger without misgiving, full of the excitement of the moment, and eager for action of any kind. They turned and began to climb the hill, as the quickest route by which they could escape observation from the road, along which the mail-car was coming; and when they had gained the summit, and were looking across the valley towards Eagle's Edge, Ellen said, "Come home to spend the day. Our house is nearer at hand than the old still, and you would sooner be sheltered. It is getting late for you to be abroad, if you don't want to be seen. You might meet Darby O'Roone himself on your road to the still, and the Green-coats seem to have multiplied tenfold during this last week, and to be about everywhere."

"But Pelham and my mother?"

"Pelham is from home to-day; he has gone to Galway on business, and mamma won't be very much surprised at your sudden appearance, for I told her your last letter held out a hope of your coming. If things should so turn out that you are not able to visit us again for a long time, this one day will be something for us all to look back upon and be glad of."

"What do you say, D'Arcy?"

"I say that if your sister will take the risk of shelter-

ing us after what she has seen this morning, the day will be, as she says, something to be glad of for ever after, wherever in space we take the recollection of it to."

"Come, D'Arcy, don't be tragic. The day is to be a jolly day. Mind you, Ellen, no entreaties or tears from anyone, or I'll not put myself in the way of them; and, Eileen aroon, there's no trickery in your thoughts? Swear to me you're not beguiling us home to get us into a trap, and keep us from fighting."

"No, Connor, no; I dare not, however much I may wish I could keep you out of harm's way. I know that there are things that would make life worthless, and I have no right to force dishonour on you or D'Arcy. Whatever the consequence of keeping your pledges may be, I can believe that nothing would be so hard for you as breaking them."

"That's right. She's a true Irishwoman, is she not, D'Arcy? Now take hold of hands, and let us have a race down the hill. Why, is not this the place we used to call Bogberry Gap, when we were children—the furthest point of our bogberry-gathering excursions from Castle Daly? Ah! and look, D'Arcy, before we begin to descend; that blue glimmer down there in the south-east is the head of our own lake, and there against the green hill you can just make out the Castle towers. I wonder what Miss Lesbia is thinking of down there this minute; not of me, at any rate, the stony-hearted little flirt! She'll not have me risking my neck to get a sight of her this summer, anyhow. Ireland's my mistress to-day, and it's all the one I'll ever have to trouble my head about—hurrah!"

Thanks to Connor's gay spirits and determination to keep serious topics out of sight, the day at Eagle's Edge passed pleasantly, and even gaily, in conversation that chiefly turned on reminiscences of childish times, in discussing which D'Arcy grew as eager and interested as the two who had been concerned in them. They did not leave the house all day, but sat together in Mrs. Daly's favourite room at the back of the house, looking away from the road. Ellen did not know whether or not her mother was aware that any special cause for anxiety respecting Connor existed; but she seemed to take unusual pleasure in his company that day, and would hardly let him stir

from the sofa by her side, but sat holding his hand as if he had been Pelham. Ellen tried to keep the two servants out of the room as much as possible, for all through the day she had an uneasy feeling that something unusual was going on outside the house. It might be far away, it might be near; but even in that secluded nook of the world there were signs of hurry and excitement. The high road, usually so quiet, had many passers on it, and countrymen and women, wearing troubled anxious faces, came up to the house, on what Ellen felt were sham errands, and in spite of all she could say to dismiss them, lingered by the windows, or stood leaning against the kitchen door, staring into the house. Long before the sun set she began to wish that the day and the parting were over. Mrs. Daly, worn out with talk, fell asleep late in the afternoon; and Connor, leaving D'Arcy busy writing out an address, of which his mind was full, went with Ellen into the wide low passage that divided the house, and stood at the back door looking forth. The farmyard on which the back door opened was for the moment free of intruders, and had no tenants but its rightful occupants—long-eared Connaught pigs routing with their long noses among the straw, and hen-mothers cackling and scratching for the benefit of their broods. Connor amused himself for a few minutes by aiming bits of turf at the head of a slumberous sow, and raising false expectations among the feathered heads of families by sending showers of gravel in their neighbourhood; but his face grew graver and more absent as he went on, and as he tossed away the last sod, he turned to Ellen with a more serious look than his face had worn all day.

"Well," he began, "have those two made it up yet?"

"What two?"

"Oh, you know; Pelham and Lesbia. You need not have been afraid to tell me, and I think I have a right to know all about it if anyone has."

"I should not have been a bit afraid, I assure you; but there's nothing to tell. Connor, can't you understand how it is? We're getting poorer and poorer; the three years of famine have fairly ruined us at last. There has not been a shilling of rent paid on the estate except for the Castle itself, and the creditors who hold mortgages on the land

would have seized everything long since if Mr. Thornley had not paid the money and taken possession of their claims, on Lesbia's account, I believe; so that now every inch of the property, and even the Castle itself, belongs virtually to her. Can Pelham go a beggar to Lesbia and say, Give me back my inheritance and yourself too? It would be too barefaced."

"I don't see that. I'd have taken it all, if she would have given it to me, as kindly as the sunshine, and would have been proud to owe it to her, the kind-hearted, sparkling little jewel of a girl, that she is! Pelham's just a dull clod—worthy of his name to haggle so long over the bargain. Now I'll tell you what I'll do to give him a lift out of the bog of his own obstinacy. D'Arcy is a thought down-hearted to-day, and of course there's no denying that we are risking our necks and may come to grief, the whole lot of us. If this is to be the last you ever see of me, I'd like to have done something for you before I vanish from the scene for evermore. When we were at Whitecliffe, and Miss Maynard was no heiress, but the little scrub you all looked down upon, I sent her a love-poem of my own, that must have shown her what I thought about her, and moreover had verses in it that D'Arcy himself would not need to be ashamed of—well, I'll turn over the whole credit of the thing to Pelham. Let him give her to understand that he sent it, and if, with that proof of the disinterestedness of his love to put before her, he daren't go and claim a return, he's a greater dolt than even I take him for."

"But, Connor dear, I'm afraid Pelham won't chose to woo in borrowed plumes, even if he thinks the poem worth offering in exchange for all the Castle Daly estates and their present mistress; and he won't do that, for he is not you!"

"The more shame, then, for him for a money-weighing Saxon, who does not know how to honour the bard; but you'll tell him, if I never see him again, how I wished at the last to wipe out old scores, and help to lift him up into all I would like well enough to have for myself. Heigho! D'Arcy's forebodings have taken hold of me. I did not think to feel like this the evening before we marched; the eve of Ireland's resurrection, that we've been looking to, and writing and singing of these two years."

"D'Arcy is full of forebodings, then?"

"Yes; it has been growing on him all the summer—no shrinking, but a presentiment of failure, and—I don't mind saying it to you—a doubt of the wisdom of the course of action resolved upon by the other leaders."

"Then why not withdraw, you and he? How I wish you would!"

"How could he, when his words, beyond anyone's, have urged it on? And for myself, where he goes I go, proud enough and glad enough to throw my life on the same cast that decides his. If he is to go down in the game, I'd be just ashamed to stand up safe; that's all about it with me. He says that the great bane of Ireland, the cause of all her failures, has been the dissensions among patriots and their lack of fidelity to each other, and that if half a dozen of us stick together to the last, in the bitterest moments of failure, we shall have done something to make the next attempt successful?"

"But you ought to be prepared for emergencies. You may have to fly the country for your lives. Connor, have you any money?"

"Not a rap, either of us; there has been no pay from our newspaper for many weeks, for its issue has been stopped, and every penny you last sent me has gone in the club expenses. We are cleaned out. D'Arcy says it does not matter, since we have hands and brains; but I confess that was one reason why I wanted to get a word with you this morning."

"We have a few pounds left in the chest up stairs, and I am sure mamma and Pelham will gladly let you have them; and it came into my mind this morning that I have two trinkets of value, which I should like to give you. One is the diamond ring that papa wore when he died. Pelham gave it to me. Keep it if you possibly can, but don't scruple to part with it to procure you means of living. The other trinket I thought of is an emerald hoop-ring that Marmaduke Pelham gave me on my birthday the year we stayed at Pelham Court. Do you think D'Arcy would take it from me if I offered it as a farewell present when we part? It is worth several pounds, and might be of use to him if he wanted to get away."

"He would take it from you, but it would not answer

the purpose you have in your mind. I should be sorry to to think of his ever being in such straits as to be willing to part with it again."

"You don't know what may happen. Wait here till I come back."

Ellen was half-way down the passage on her way to her room when a loud knock at the front door of the house startled her. She ran back to Connor pale and breathless.

"What shall we do? The door must be opened at once, or they will come round here, whoever they are, and see you."

"Where can we go to be out of the way?"

"Mamma's bedroom will be the best place, for it can only be reached through the sitting-room, where mamma is sleeping. Go there at once, and call D'Arcy, softly, to follow you as you pass through. Take care not to awaken mamma, if you can possibly help it."

"Right! I'll go; but don't frighten yourself. Perhaps it's little Lesbia herself; and I'll court her for Pelham, and settle it all before I go."

The knock came again, before Connor's sentence was completed, and he walked towards the sitting-room, while Ellen flew down the hall, and stood before the door to secure its not being opened by the servant till the minute necessary for his disappearance had elapsed. When she lifted the latch she was confronted by two men in the dress of police officers, and saw in the distance two more, mounted, and holding the horses of their companions at the gate. Their faces were strange to her, and so was the accent in which they asked—

"Does Mr. Pelham Daly live here?"

"Yes," Ellen answered, "but he is from home. Your business, whatever it is, must wait till his return. Mr. Daly's mother, who lives with him, has lately been very ill, and must not be disturbed or alarmed on any account."

"Very sorry, miss, but we have a warrant to search the house for arms, and time presses. We are obliged to do our duty."

"I am sure you will do it as considerately and quietly as possible then," Ellen answered, her courage rising with the greatness of the peril. "To prove the truth of my

words and the necessity for quiet, I will take you into the room where my sick mother is asleep; and if you will stay there quietly, I will myself bring you the few arms we have in the house. I feel sure you will find there has been a mistake in your being sent here. Mr. Pelham Daly's loyalty has never been suspected."

"We have nothing to do with that, you see, miss. We have only to obey orders."

"Follow me, then, softly, if you please."

Ellen led the way to the little sitting-room at the back of the house, and, opening the door, noiselessly stepped back for the men to enter. The sight of Mrs. Daly tranquilly asleep on the sofa, with her worn, white cheek resting on her thin jewelled hand, had quite as much effect on the intruders as she expected when she brought them there. They drew back a little from the door, and looked at each other sheepishly.

"No need for us to go in there, miss," the elder of the two said, carefully scanning Ellen's face as he spoke; "I will stand in the hall, and my mate will go round the house with you. Stay, though, for form's sake, I'll step inside and take a seat till you come back."

Ellen feared that some sudden look of relief on her face had caused this change of purpose, and her heart sank, but she did not dare to object. She pointed silently to a seat near the door, and then led the man, followed by the younger officer, to Pelham's bedroom, where there was a case of pistols and a gun leaning against the wall. These the man secured, and carried into the hall, opening the doors of the other rooms, and looking in as he stepped backwards and forwards. Then he asked to be shown the servants' rooms; and Ellen led him a bewildering circuit through cross passages and empty rooms that brought him out to the front of the house again.

"It's a vast dreary place for so few people to live in; I wonder you like it," the man remarked, shrugging his shoulders, as he looked up at the reeking damp-stains and forlorn shreds of paper hanging from the wet walls. "We should pull such a worn-out old pile down in my country, and build up a snug farmhouse in its place."

"It was not too large for us once," Ellen said; "and

since the famine it would be as difficult to find people to pull it down as to fill it."

"True enough; it's all a strange sight to us. We've been sent over from England to help to keep the people over here quiet, as we supposed; and, as far as we've seen, there don't seem to be no people about; nothing but ruined villages and waste lands as we can see. I'll take these here pistols away with me, by your leave, miss; you'll have no need of them now we're here to keep the peace, and I'll trouble you no further but to go round and tell my mate I'm ready to go."

Long as the time had seemed to Ellen, the inspection had in reality only occupied a few minutes. Mrs. Daly was still asleep when she reached the door of the sitting-room, and the police-officer, in the same spot where she had left him, was occupied in replacing a bulky pocket-book, whose contents he had apparently been examining, into the pocket of his coat. At Ellen's sign, he came out into the passage, and met her with a smile of satisfaction on his face that she could not understand.

"You need not have alarmed yourself, miss; we've done no harm, you see," he remarked, when Ellen gave him his comrade's message.

"I don't know how it may be in your country," Ellen answered, "but here lonely women do not expect to be intruded on when the master of the house is away."

"We were sorry to disturb you, miss, but we had our orders; and when all things come to be looked into, I fancy you'll find that we have only done what was necessary, and taken away what it was our business to take. Good-day to you."

Ellen followed the man to the door, and watched the little cavalcade, as it wound along the road, till it was lost behind the hill; then she ran back into the sitting-room, and threw herself on her knees by her mother's sofa. Never had she been so thankful for anything in her life as that Mrs. Daly's afternoon slumber had been so deep and lasted so long; and then so strange did it seem that those white lids should have remained closed so long with no weightier seal than that of sleep upon them, that a sudden fear seized her, and she stooped and pressed her lips on her mother's eyes to assure herself that the warmth of

life was in them still. Mrs. Daly started up awake at last.

"My dear, have I slept too long? Where are Connor and D'Arcy? You have not let them go without saying good-bye to me?"

"No, dear mamma," Ellen said, struggling hard to speak naturally; "but I am not sorry I have awakened you, for I think the time when they will have to say good-bye has nearly come."

"Then make Molly bring some tea. We must not let them start on their walking tour fasting. You should have wakened me sooner."

And when, at the sound of her voice, Connor and D'Arcy appeared from the next room, she began so eagerly to urge their remaining for another meal, that nothing struck her as unusual in their look or manner. Ellen slipped away to hasten the appearance of the supper, and stop the clack of tongues among the servants, and in a few minutes D'Arcy and Connor followed her to exchange hand shakes and looks of congratulation, since they could not venture on words.

"True as steel," Connor whispered; "did not I know you would be?"

"It was instinct, not reason," Ellen answered; "and oh, Connor avourneen, I hope—I hope I have done right, and not wrong by you. Perhaps I shall have to regret it all my life; for I believe you would be safer if you were now riding away a prisoner with those men, who are looking for you, than you will ever be again when you have left this house; yet I did not even think of betraying you."

"And you may take this for your comfort, that if you had, and the fighting had come off while I was locked up, I'd have revenged myself on you by blowing my brains out the very first day I was set at liberty. Nothing but that and the haunting afterwards would have equalled your deserts."

D'Arcy seemed disposed to linger over that last meal in Mrs. Daly's little sitting-room; but Connor, who was struggling to keep up his spirits to nonsense-pitch to the last moment, and signally failing every now and then, was in haste to be gone. Their plan was to wait at the old still till midnight, and then march southward with the

comrades, who were to join them there, confidently expecting that before the morning dawned they should find themselves at the head of such a force that only an organised body of troops would attempt to stop their progress.

"The true-hearted among the soldiers will come out and join us," Connor averred to Ellen, when, after tea, she came into the hall with him to slip the little purse of money she had got together into his soldier's knapsack.

"But supposing no one joins you at the still to-night?" she asked.

"We shall go alone to Tipperary," D'Arcy, who was standing near, answered. "I read what you are thinking in your face. The domiciliary visits, of which we have had a specimen, show greater alertness on the part of the authorities than we expected, and it is possible that very many arrests on suspicion have been made to-day, and that most of those who sympathise with us about here are put out of the way of helping us; but we two have escaped for the present, and an hour or two's travelling will take us among our friends who will have had better luck than ourselves. At all events, we are determined to show among them, however it may be going."

"And how shall I know how it is going?"

"It will be in the air; no fear of your not knowing."

Ellen now rose from her knees by the knapsack, and D'Arcy came near and took her hands in his.

"I have been asking myself all day," he said, "whether I am most glad or most sorry for the circumstances that make my individual fate of no special consequence to any human being. When the doubt that for the last six weeks has been growing upon me predominates, I can conscientiously say I am glad, and even thankful, to you for leaving me the lonely man I am. If, as I begin to fear, a glorious struggle even is denied to us, and only the bitter dregs of ignominious failure given to us to wring out, it will be something in the torture of it to know that my share of the shame and ridicule that will be cast on us will weigh on no one but myself; that I can be tossed away as a tool broken from all its uses without involving any other life in the ignominious ruin."

"No, D'Arcy, no," Ellen said, looking up to him with eyes full of tears; "you can't, you must not say so, or you will break our hearts. You are a brother to Pelham and me almost as dear as Connor, and whatever happens to you, and wherever you go, our thoughts and our love will follow you; and not only ours, but those of the hundreds whose hearts your words have touched, and who will have better or worse hopes for Ireland all their lives as you prove yourself strong or weak in whatever comes. Here, I want you to take a token from me—a little bit of 'the green' that is to pledge you not to throw your life away in any moment of bitterness, but to keep it for Ireland's service when the way of serving her best is clearer to us all."

Ellen took Marmaduke Pelham's ring from her finger as she spoke and put it into D'Arcy's hands, who tried to speak in answer, but failed, and after stooping down and pressing the lips that trembled too much for speech on the hands he still held, he walked away down the hall, and leaned against the open door of the house, till Connor came from the inner room, where he had been taking leave of his mother, to join him. A slender silver thread of the waxing harvest moon was beginning to show in the sky when the young men left the house arm in arm, and crossing the level space at the back, were soon climbing the side of Lac-na-Weel. Ellen watched them till they were no more than black specks against the green, and then went back to sit by her mother's sofa, and listen with a heavy foreboding heart to her regrets at Connor's wandering habits, and thankfulness that Pelham was different, and could be trusted always to stay by her. What should she do if anything ever happened to take Pelham away?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"When Love with unconfined wings
Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings
To whisper at the grates ;
When I lie tangled in her hair,
And fettered to her eye,
The birds that wander in the air
Know no such liberty."

"No, Wattie, there is no use in your trying to play tricks on me about the letters now, because if you do I shall feel obliged to send you back to Whitecliffe, and take away the gun and sword I gave you when you came here," said Lesbia, looking up with dignity from behind the silver tea-urn she was presiding over, at her little cousin who was executing an insulting war-dance before her face, with the letter-bag concealed behind his back. "I can't think how it is that you don't learn to treat me with more respect, Wattie, now that you are staying with me at Castle Daly, and I am so kind to you and make you so many presents. Now don't you think he ought to treat me differently, John?" she continued, appealing to her brother, who stood with his back to the fireplace tranquilly watching the contest.

"I can't say. Perhaps Wattie is a clothes-philosopher, like Professor Teufelsdröckh, whose life you decline to study, and he is taking this picturesque method of expressing his conviction that nothing more respectable exists under all your toggery than the original little Babette whom he was brought up to bully."

"I wish you would make him give up the letter-bag, however, John. Don't you want the *Times* yourself?"

"No ; it will be full of the Irish rebellion, and we know more about it than they do out there."

"The Irish rebellion ! Why, is there a rebellion ? Has it really begun, and you stand warming your back there as quietly as if you did not care what happened to us all ?"

"I am warming my back because I have been up all night writing letters and transacting business, and I am very tired ; and as for the rebellion, I believe, or at least

I hope, that it is virtually over, and that throughout Ireland, as about here, the active spirits who were looking forward to a general scrimmage will awake this morning in safe keeping, comfortably stowed in prison out of the way of mischief."

"Oh, John! was that what you were doing all yesterday, when you went out so early and did not get back till after dark?"

"Do you take me for a police officer? or do you suppose that I have power to realise the Roman emperor's wish, with a difference, and concentrate all the rebels in Ireland in one prison-van?"

"But you were busy all day; and, John, do you know that I saw James Morris shaking his fist at you, and making the most horrid possible grimaces behind your back?"

"I hope it relieved his feelings."

"You *had* been helping to send people to prison, then, I am sure. If Connor Daly had been one of the rebels brought before you, what should you have done?"

"He was not one; but it would perhaps have been the best thing that could have happened to him if he had been, for I fear he has left Dublin. Now, Wattie, we have had enough of those antics. Give up the letter-bag to me and come to breakfast."

"You ought to be extremely anxious, if you have the least affection for your poor mother," said Lesbia reproachfully, "for there is most likely a letter from Bride in it to tell us how she is."

Under this reproof, and with the prospect of a hot scone spread with honey, which Lesbia placed before him, Wattie surrendered the bag and subsided into his breakfast, and the brother and sister, after dividing its contents, proceeded to open their budgets and impart sentences from their contents to each other.

"Mrs. Maynard is not so well, I am sorry to say, and Bride is in despair at the prospect of the Irish rebellion coming off in her absence, Lesbia," said John.

"And oh, John," exclaimed Lesbia, "this is from Louisa Pelham, and her brother's regiment has been ordered to Galway, and she seems to think we ought to ask him to come and stay here."

"Captain Pelham will be otherwise employed than in paying visits, if there is truth in this, or foreshadowing of truth, as is sometimes the case with rumours," said John, gravely, as he ran his eye rapidly over a paragraph in a paper he had just unfolded. "This looks as if other districts had been less successful in disposing of their rebels than we have been about here. Listen: 'The following intelligence was received last evening in Dublin. The whole of the south of Ireland is in rebellion. The station at Thurles is on fire, and the rails torn up by the mob. At Clonmel the fighting is dreadful; the people arrive in masses; the Dublin Club leaders are there. The troops were speedily overpowered; many refused to act. At Kilkenny the contest is proceeding, and there, too, the mob is said to be successful.'"

"Do you think it is true, John? It sounds just like what Connor Daly expected would happen. I hope the rebels won't come here, or at all events not unless he is with them, to make them behave well to us, as he promised he would."

"Promised! What do you mean, Lesbia? Have you seen Connor Daly lately, and where? How came he to make you such an idiotic promise? You had better tell me the truth, Lesbia, at once. Connor Daly's whereabouts may prove to be of consequence to more people than himself just now, and unacknowledged communications from him, if you have to confess to them by and by, would be very compromising to you. You had better take me into your confidence in time."

"Don't frighten me to death, if you please, John, or I shall not be able to remember a word of what you want me to tell you. There is no occasion whatever for you to put yourself into such a fuss. I have not seen Connor Daly since we left London."

"Connor Daly was never in London, as far as I know."

"No, not as far as you know, I acknowledge; but I think it is very hard that I should be made to confess things of this kind at breakfast-time, with people looking on and listening," said Lesbia, glancing at little Walter Maynard, and beginning to sob.

"If you are afraid of Wattie we will wait till break-

fast is over," John answered a little severely, and turning back to his letters he opened and read one after another with gradually increasing anxiety on his face, while Lesbia, with all disposition for breakfast taken away, sat silent behind her urn, and tried hard to work herself into a state of indignation, hot enough to enable her to withstand John's efforts to intrude into her confidence. She was not prepared for the gentleness and gravity of his manner when, after sending Wattie out of the room, he came near and seated himself by her side. "Now, little one, I have not much time to spare this morning, and I am sure you will forgive me if I seem abrupt or over anxious. More important consequences may be involved in the matter we have to discuss than you or perhaps any of us can foresee as yet, and I can't judge how to shield you most effectually unless you are quite open with me. You need not be afraid of surprising me. Bride and I have been dreading to hear it for some time past."

"Dreading to hear what Connor Daly said to me about the Irish rebellion?"

"Lesbia, I think you must understand me better than that. What I mean is that we have feared to hear that you were engaged to him."

"Then I must say that I think you are both very unkind, and that it is a shame," cried Lesbia, drawing herself away from her brother, and looking at him with tearful, flashing eyes. "You have no right to think so meanly of me as that I should have engaged myself to Connor, or anyone, secretly. I dare say you have let other people know what you believe, and put it into *their* heads to suspect me, and think poorly of me, too. It would be just like you."

"No, Babette, it would not be at all like us; and you don't in the least mean what you are saying now," John answered smiling.

"I mean it would be just like what is always happening—just the way things fall out here—to make people misunderstand me, and fancy I like what I don't like, and take offence and be unkind to me," sobbed Lesbia.

"Come, Baby, do try to be a sensible child for once," pleaded John in despair at the sight of her tears.

"Leave the general public alone and try to keep to the matter in question. We will say nothing about an engagement since the word offends you. What I require you to tell me is, what amount of understanding does at present exist between you and Connor Daly, and how you came to see him unknown to all your friends?"

"Bride says," began Lesbia, drawing away her hands from her face, and assuming an aspect of dignified reserve, "that it is extremely unbecoming in a woman to speak of—of—admiration that she does not return, and I told you of Captain Pelham's offer, which perhaps I ought not to have done. You must not expect me to betray people's feelings *every* time they speak of them to me."

"You would not waste my time in this fashion, Lesbia, if you knew how much depended on my getting the information I want you to give me at once. Perhaps, though, all that is immediately necessary is that you should tell me where you saw Connor Daly last, and when he made the extraordinary promise you quoted just now about protecting you during the rebellion."

"I have told you once, and you did not believe me. The last time I saw poor Connor was in London, on St. Patrick's Day, at the ball, when I wore my Limerick lace dress and the shamrocks, and he promised to take care of us through the rebellion when he and I were in the balcony together, just before you took me down to supper."

"What brought him to London, then?"

"He came to see me. Yes, you may look surprised, John. *You* don't think me worth all that trouble, because I am only your little sister, whom you don't think highly of; but I am not everybody's sister."

"I am not surprised at Mr. Connor Daly's taking the trouble to come to London to see you; but at his having the coolness to force himself upon you unknown to your friends. He was perfectly aware you were worth the trouble of a journey. Though he is acting the part of a fool just now, I give him credit for being quite a sufficiently wideawake young gentleman to know that."

"Yes, John, you think he cares for me only for my money; but is it not rather hard in you to be so sure of that? Why should not I count for something—just

for a little something, too—with somebody; and, if I do, why should not a person forget about my money, and speak to me as another girl might be spoken to? It is not that part of Connor Daly's conduct I see any fault in."

"Yet you say you are not engaged."

"No. One is not obliged to take a person because one believes he likes one sincerely, though you do think that such a marvellous thing is to happen to me. I could not accept Connor Daly's honest liking, not because he was poor and I was rich—I hate to think of that as a barrier—but because—and he found it out that night; oh, John I am so unhappy that I can't help telling you, though you will despise me for it—because I love another person better; and he is like you, John—he can't forget about my money. Sometimes I almost hate him for thinking of that more than of me, for I know he loves me; but oftenest I feel that even if he never speaks kindly to me again I shall love him always better than anyone else in the world. Bride would think it dreadful of me to say this, and you will despise me, but I cannot help speaking. I am so unhappy."

"I am very far indeed from despising you, my dear little sister; you are a brave child for telling me the whole truth. As this is so with you, you and I must help each other to put personal thoughts out of our minds for the present. I fear that very dark times are coming on our friends. It is hard for you to hear the news I have to tell just upon this confidence, but you will have to hear it sooner or later."

"Oh, let me hear at once. Is it that Pelham—that the Dalys are in trouble about Connor?"

"They are, or will soon be, in great anxiety about Connor, for I see in one of this morning's newspapers that a proclamation has been issued offering large rewards for the arrest, on charge of high treason, of the Dublin Club leaders, and Connor Daly's name is in the list."

"Would he be hanged?"

"If he is taken and convicted of high treason he is liable to be hanged."

"But if the news in this morning's paper should prove to be correct, and the rebels are succeeding?"

"It will be the most temporary success, and every moment of it makes the case of those who incited the rising worse than before. For their sakes, as well as on every other account, we must hope and pray that it may be put down in a few hours—before there has been time for great crimes to be committed. While the alarm lasts, suspicion will be rife everywhere, and innocent people, if they have enemies, may be involved with the guilty. I have a letter here from old O'Roone. It seems that while I was at Westport yesterday, an order was sent out to search Eagle's Edge for arms, and that letters and papers of a highly treasonable character were seized by the police and brought away. O'Roone discovered—or pretended to discover—that some of the most damaging of these papers were in Pelham Daly's handwriting, and sent a warrant to arrest him late last night on his return from Galway, where it seems he has been for two days on private business, unluckily without my knowledge. Pelham refuses to account in any way for his possession of the papers, and it has been decided to send him, with others who were arrested yesterday with arms in their hands, this morning to prison in Galway. O'Roone pleads the urgent necessity of the time and the danger of a rescue being attempted if the prisoners are allowed to remain at Ballyowen, as an excuse for this haste; but I am afraid there is spite in it, and that it shows a determination on his part to inflict as much hardship on young Daly as he can while he has the power."

"Oh, John, John, and it was for my sake that he made the O'Roones his enemies! and I was comfortably asleep in bed last night while all this was happening, and I have eaten my breakfast and talked and laughed this morning."

"Little one, you must be reasonable; you must try to keep calm, or I shall not be able to trust you. You and I must both remember that these are dear, dearest friends, but that they have not chosen we should be anything more to them, and even in this time of trial we have no right——"

"No, John, no; I won't remember any such thing, *You* may do as you like: but while they are suffering I shall not think of rights or of anything but how I can best serve them. If afterwards they should choose to despise my service, I shall not complain. I shall go quite away,

from them and bear it as well as I can ; but I shall never be sorry that I did what I could, when everyone else was against them."

"It was for you I was trying to be wise, not for myself, Babette ; but I believe you are right, and that you will make no mistake in following your generous heart-instincts. I will trust you, and not hold you back in anything you wish to do. We will act together."

"But perhaps we can do nothing I talked of *afterwards* ; but oh, John, perhaps there will be no afterwards ; you said a dreadful thing would happen if Connor were taken."

"And convicted of treason. But Connor has committed himself by word and writing and by participation in illegal acts, whereas there can be nothing against Pelham except these papers ; and even if he refuses to explain how they came into his possession, I don't suppose anything worse can happen to him than imprisonment while the present state of things lasts, and the magistrates have power to keep suspected persons in confinement. Perhaps he may even be detained for six months, but it can't be longer."

"In prison for six months ! Mrs. Daly will die of misery long before the six months are over."

"The treasonable proclamations were no doubt sent or brought to Eagle's Edge by Connor or young O'Donnell. When you spoke of Connor, I thought you might have seen him, and be able to prove that he had been in the neighbourhood lately. Perhaps the papers were sent to Ellen. Ah, I owe Pelham service indeed for the part he is acting, if it is for her sake, to keep her name from being talked of, perhaps to spare her the agony of having to testify against her lover, that he refuses to clear himself."

"I wonder if Mrs. Daly and Ellen are alone at Eagle's Edge now. How desolate they will feel !"

"The first thing to be done is for you to go to them ; you must offer to bring them here, of course, if they will come. I shall ride at once to Ballyowen, see old O'Roone, and learn all I can from him. If the prisoners have not already been sent off to Galway, I will see Pelham and consult with him on what is best to be done. If I miss him in Ballyowen, I think I had better go on to Galway myself, and wait there till I can get access to him. In

the present state of feeling, it may not be easy even for a person as well known as I am to communicate with prisoners supposed to be rebels; but you may tell Mrs. Daly that no efforts shall be spared. I shall go on to Dublin if I see that anything can be done for him there."

"And John, dear John, don't think me very foolish; but if you should see him, and if he should look very unhappy, would you mind telling him that I have gone to his mother, and that I don't mean to leave her again till he is set free? I have seen him look so very much pleased when I have paid any little attention to her, that I can't help believing it would comfort him to hear that."

"Well, run and get ready; I will order the car round, and James Morris shall drive you to Eagle's Edge. He is always eager to see his former young mistress, and I will indulge him to-day, though he is an arrant rebel, and though he does make grimaces at me behind my back."

"And, John, you are not angry with me about—the message?"

"No, no, I will see what can be done; but, considering all things, it is perhaps as well that Mrs. Joseph Maynard's rheumatic fever continues obstinate, and that Bride is not here to criticise our sayings and doings."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Hide, blushing Glory, hide
That day among the cabbages."

It was well for Lesbia that she had by this time overcome the nervousness that had once made a car-ride along the rough roads round Castle Daly a painful experience, for James Morris set out on the road to Eagle's Edge at a great pace, and only relaxed his exertions to lean over from his driving seat at intervals and whisper into Lesbia's ear an emphatic assurance that she might trust him to bring her in the twinkling of an eye to them with whom her heart was; and God bless her for being in all the mad haste and the hurry she was to comfort them. The way to Eagle's Edge lay for a mile or two along the public road

to Ballyowen, and by the shore of the lake, till a certain cross road leading up among the hills was reached. About a quarter of a mile before they came to this turning, Lesbia's eye was attracted by the appearance of a little crowd of people on the summit of an eminence they were beginning to mount. They came in sight in detachments, first a barefooted advanced guard, that appeared to be running on in front of, then turning back to gaze at, something—some procession following behind; then the heads of two files of mounted policemen, carrying arms, appeared above the crest of the hill, and between them, two and two, walked slowly a string of other men. Their figures and their motions grew distinct, as they began to descend the slope, and Lesbia perceived that they were bound together hand and foot, prisoners. James Morris drew up his horse suddenly, as the meaning of the scene dawned on him, and a fierce oath burst from his lips.

"Will we have to pass him on the road, Miss Lesbia?" he said, turning back to look at her.

"Who, James?" she asked, in a trembling voice, struggling hard to put back the recognition that every moment brought nearer. "It can't be anyone we know. No one we know could be treated like that."

"It is, then; it's young Mr. Daly, and the boys who were taken yesterday for marching with their pikes across the hill. Look for yourself! It's him that goes first. Who but a Daly would hold his head up and walk like that, proud and stately, whatever they do to him? And that one wid the green coat riding near, who is stooping down to spake to him now, with the devil's own spiteful sneer on his ugly face, is the thundering villain, Darby O'Roone. May iver curse he has iver earned be paid to him to the last mite, and I can't wish him worse than that. Look for yourself, then, Miss Lesbia, 'leer!"

But Lesbia could not summon courage to look; her eyes were fascinated by the wild rage that convulsed her companion's face, as, throwing the reins on the horse's neck, he sprang upon the driving seat and shook both fists with impotent anger towards O'Roone; then, with a sudden change of mood, he jumped down to the ground, and coming to the side of the car where Lesbia

sat, and looking humbly in her face, said in the tone of a child making a confession, "Miss Lesbia, once Mr. Connor and I played the young master there a spiteful trick anint a dog he cared for, and now I'd like to go down on my bare knees on the road and ax his pardon. It's not 'the cause' that brings him to this. It's not that he has 'the cause' at heart like Mr. Connor; it is that he won't turn informer agin his own people to save himself. Glory be to God for that same. I'd go down on my bare knees this minute to thank him for it."

"I will get down and stand in the road, I think, James," said Lesbia, putting out a little hand to be helped from the car. "I—I—think I shall like it better."

She was trembling so that she had to lean against the side of the car to support herself as she stood, and she put up her hands to hide her face. The tramp of horse hoofs and feet came nearer and nearer. Should she look up at him as he passed? Would it be better or worse for him to meet her eyes? Would he read in them how she loved him? Would he know that it was a thousand thousand times more than it had ever been before, for seeing him thus, with gyves on his wrists, bearing insult and suffering for his brother's sake? Surely yes, and surely in that hard hour there would be some help, some warmth to his heart from knowing what filled hers to such painful overflowing. Lesbia took her hands down and stood quite upright, as her determination was made. The procession of prisoners was now nearly opposite the car, and young O'Roone had made a sign to the police-officers to stop; and jumping from his horse, was evidently preparing to address her. Lesbia walked boldly forward to meet him. He approached with a meaning look of evil triumph on his face, that filled her with disgust.

"An uncomfortable meeting this, Miss Maynard, is it not?" he drawled in an affected voice. "I fear such a sight as this must be distressing to English eyes, but, at all events, I hope it will have the effect of reassuring you as to the tranquillity of the country. If you look round you will see how satisfactorily *all* our would-be disturbers of the peace are disposed of. Let me invite you to look round."

"Thank you," said Lesbia, "that was exactly what I was intending to do, for I have a message for a friend I see among the crowd there. Stand aside, Mr. O'Roone, if you please, and let me pass."

Then drawing her dress close round her, so that it might not touch him, Lesbia brushed past and walked up to Pelham Daly, the crowd of hangers-on instinctively making way at the sight of her rich dress and the little pale face that tried to look proud, and was only quivering with feeling.

"Mr. Daly—Pelham," she said, putting both her hands on his manacled wrists, "I am glad I have met you. I am on my way now to Eagle's Edge, to stay with your mother till she has you with her again. Can you give me any message for her that will comfort her for you?"

Pelham had only a minute before known who was near him. All through the slow march from Ballyowen his thoughts had been full of another occasion when he had traversed that same road with a crowd of ragged observers at his back, the centre of attraction and remark to them all. He had been almost smiling at the recollection of the bitter thoughts that had been aroused in his mind by that observation then. That he should ever have thought he had anything to complain of when he was receiving a tumultuous welcome to a hospitable joyous home was a curious enough reflection to haunt him just now. He remembered that when they reached the top of the next ascent the turrets of Castle Daly would be in sight, and with the thought came a vivid picture of how the Castle had looked on that particular day, as he and his uncle approached it. The front door standing wide, the shouting huzzaing crowd of servants and tenants, his father standing above, stretching out eager hands of welcome, and looking down into his face with loving eyes that asked for sympathy. While this vision was before him, filling his mind with regretful yearnings, he heard a voice that made him start, a timid touch caressed his hands, and looking up he met once more a beseeching look of love, that again seemed to ask admittance into his heart, not to be put back by any conventionalities, for any stubborn pride this time. His eyes filled with sudden tears

but he was not ashamed of them, he would not have cared if the whole universe had been looking on at him then. For him, at that moment, there was nothing in existence but the little white anxious face turned up to his. Love had asserted itself over the whole of his being now, and somehow he felt, and had time in that instant to feel, that it was his father, as well as Lesbia, who was calling on him to rise above the spirit of self-regarding pride, and be true to love in that hour.

"God bless you for coming to speak to me to-day. God bless you for ever, Lesbia," he said in a deep earnest voice that everyone around heard. "Tell my mother that you saw and spoke to me—nothing else—and she will be comforted for me, for she will understand that after that nothing will hurt me."

It hardly took a minute for the two sentences, and for the look between, that bound two souls so closely together that nothing outward could ever come in again to separate them. O'Roone rushed forward with a frantic oath, and ordered the march to proceed instantly. Lesbia felt herself violently thrust aside towards the edge of the road, and the minute after the cavalcade was far on its way down the side of the hill proceeding at a rapid pace; and she was standing with her back against a stone wall, surrounded by a little crowd of people whom the rapid movement of the march had left behind. A red cloaked old crone came up, threw her arms round her neck and kissed her, and a bare-footed, bare-headed girl flung herself on her knees before her in the road, seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

"I hope your ladyship will pardon us for touching you," the old woman said; "we know we ought not to do it, but we can't help it, for our hearts as well as yours are wid the boys they are carrying off. All the son I have is among them, and Mary there, on her knees—shure it is her own bachelor, the boy that was to have married her on Sunday, that was walking along wid him that you own, foot to foot, and wrist to wrist, wid young Mr. Daly; and it came over her to thank you for what you said to him; her boy has a mother that'll want comforting too. Shure you 'ill forgive us the freedom we've taken, that came from our hearts."

"Come to Castle Daly and talk to me about your son," Lesbia said, while the deep rich colour rushed back into her cheeks at the old woman's words, and then—she could not quite understand afterwards how she came to do such a thing, except that her heart was very full of tender yearning, and longing to comfort some one—she stooped down, and, kissing the kneeling girl on the forehead, whispered low in her ear, "You too must come and see me, and tell me all about him that was walking by Mr. Daly, and I think we shall both have them back soon."

How she finally extricated herself she hardly knew, but the people followed her to the car, and a dozen hands were raised to help her in, and busied in settling the rug about her feet, and their voices followed her with emphatic blessings to the turn of the road that led up among the quiet hills. It was a relief to be among the mountains, with only their sunshiny green heads overlooking her; for James Morris judiciously turned his back, and, with his eyes fixed on his horse's ears, whistled "The Wearing of the Green" uninterruptedly till they reached Eagle's Edge. Lesbia could lean over on the cushion of the car, and, unobserved, weep out her excitement and question the strange new joy that, in spite of anxieties, would send irresistible thrills through her. "Him that you own." Yes, it was *that* she had done. She had *owned* him; she, herself, among that ragged crowd, with his greatest enemy looking on. Poor, in danger, accused of crime, a lover whose homage would not be esteemed an honour by most people. What would Bride, what would the Pelhams, what would Aunt Joseph say to such a termination of her young lady career? It was very unlike anything she had ever planned for herself. She used to imagine giving herself away with great ceremony some day to some one whose choice would raise her in her own estimation and in the world's. Then the chief purpose of courtship had appeared to be gratification of vanity, and love had only meant homage to herself. It did not mean that now; this feeling that had come to her had no room for gratified vanity, no place for self in it, and yet how much better it was than anything she had ever known!

Her tears had been long since dried when the car drove

up to the house door at Eagle's Edge, and she began to be afraid that she should bring into the house a face inconsistently joyful with the purport of her visit. There was no one at hand to take the car, and though both doors of the house stood wide open, and the sunshine was pouring in, the place had a melancholy, deserted look, as if there was no longer anything in it that anybody cared to guard. Lesbia, after knocking in vain, entered, and made her way into the sitting-room usually occupied by Mrs. Daly, and waited. Soon Ellen's face, pale and anxious, appeared at the door of the inner room, and, catching sight of Lesbia, brightened, as she came forward to shake hands with her.

"You have heard what has happened," Ellen said in a weary, hopeless voice, that, coming from her, showed plainly how much she had suffered. "You know that they have taken Pelham from us, and mamma, poor mamma! it was like tearing her life away. She is sleeping now, in there. Dr. Lynch came this morning; he set out from the Hollow as soon as the news reached them there, and was with us early, or I don't know what I should have done. He gave mamma an opiate, and she is sleeping quietly at last; but I dread what her waking will be. I can't keep her from thinking the very worst. She will not believe that she shall ever see him again."

"Let me go to her when she wakes," said Lesbia; "I have something to tell her that will comfort her. Dear Ellen, only think, I met him on the road just now, and spoke to him, and he gave me a message to bring here."

Ellen did not think the circumstance of this meeting so important or consoling as to warrant the look of blushing exultation with which Lesbia announced it; but she was disposed to catch at any comfort that came, and make the most of it.

"You actually saw Pelham, did you, Lesbia? Well, I believe there will be some comfort for mamma in your having seen him this morning. It will convince her that he was safe and well up to the time when you met him. And yet she was dreading to know that he had actually left the neighbourhood. Dr. Lynch promised her that she should go to Ballyowen to be near him if she would try to sleep and get strong enough."

"They have gone to Galway."

"That is too far for us to follow. I could not go so far from Anne O'Flaherty in the state she is now."

"But if I were with your mother, could not she and I go to Galway together? You would trust me to take care of her, would you not? I—I promised your brother just now that I would stay with you and her till he was restored to you, and he was glad; he said, 'Nothing would hurt him, knowing that.' This was the message I was to give you."

The full significance of the meeting began to dawn on Ellen now, and she threw her arms round Lesbia's neck.

"Babette, dear Babette, how very good you are! but will your brother and sister really let you stay with us, and be a daughter to mamma, while disgrace and danger hang over both the boys? Are you really come to take your place among us just now, when we are brought so low, when everyone is against us?"

"Will you let me in? Do you love me enough? Do you think me good enough?" whispered Lesbia, clinging to her; and then the two girls embraced again, and shed a few tears together.

"How I wish mamma were awake that I might take you to her at once," Ellen cried. "You will be better to her than sleep. I little thought that any light could come to us this dark day; but you have brought it, for I know now that Pelham is walking to prison this minute with a light heart. Lesbia, I will tell you something. He and I were sitting just here, talking about you, at the very moment that it happened, when the summons came for him to go."

"It was late last night, was it not?" questioned Lesbia, with a look in her eyes that implored—"Tell me everything, every word."

"It was late, and we were sitting nearly in the dark. There was a fire in the grate at which I had broiled some eggs for Pelham's supper, and there was a faint light from the moon; but that was all the light we had. Mamma had gone to bed, and he and I had been sitting together talking for half an hour. He had returned from Galway only an hour before, and had been telling me of the dis-

appointment his visit there had been to him, since the person who had appointed to meet him there never appeared. We think now that the appointment was a ruse of Darby O'Roone's to get Pelham out of the way while they were plotting against him, and to throw an air of mystery over Pelham's doings just now. The day had been a very anxious one to me, too, and Pelham brought news that increased my fears. He had heard in Galway that Connor's name was in the list of Dublin Club leaders, against whom arrests on charge of high treason are out. While we talked sorrowfully of Connor I gave Pelham a foolish affectionate message Connor had sent to him. I can't tell you when and how; but I told Pelham all, and he was very much touched. There was an allusion to you in this message, and, discussing that, Pelham branched off to speak of his love for you, and of the circumstances that forbade his ever letting you know it. I was listening and thinking, I had two brothers whose hearts I could be proud of, though they were so different one from the other, when there came a knock at the front door that I knew the meaning of in a moment. I was half frantic, and wanted to drag Pelham away to hide him somewhere, but he would not let me; he went to the door himself and brought in our untimely visitors. They proved to be, as I expected, the two police sergeants who had searched our house in the middle of the day—and with them was Darby O'Roone, who had come for his own pleasure, I think, to triumph over us in our trouble. They began to question Pelham about some letters and papers taken by one of the sergeants from a portfolio that happened to be on this table when I stupidly left him alone in this room on his first visit. O'Roone was loud and insolent—bent on entrapping Pelham into some admissions that would tell against him; but the Englishmen were civil enough at first, evidently only wanting information. They had heard of the rewards offered for Connor's arrest, and they hoped to get a clue to his whereabouts from Pelham or me, believing that he was somewhere in the neighbourhood then. Pelham could easily have satisfied them, and saved himself from any annoyance, if he had chosen. But, of course, he did not choose. He was very quiet and firm all the time, and

made no other answer to their questions than that he could not explain how the papers came to be in his house, and when they told him that Darby O'Roone had brought a warrant to arrest him, and would produce it if he refused to give the information required, he said he was ready to go with the officers of justice wherever they chose to take him. Oh, Lesbia, it was a terrible hour for me, for I had the clue the officers wanted, and I could have told them what would have cleared Pelham at once, and I did not know whether I ought to speak or be silent. I think I should have spoken if Pelham had not put out his hand in his quiet way and taken mine and held it all the time the discussion went on. Then when the voices grew loud mamma heard, and rushed in and clung to Pelham and implored him not to go—not to let himself be parted from her. It was very hard for him. He carried mamma back into her room and stayed there alone with her for a few minutes. I don't know what he said to her, but it satisfied her that he was right to go, and quieted her for the time. I was left here with the men, and the English sergeant came up to me while Pelham was away and put his hand on my shoulder, and said kindly he was sure that was a good son and brother who had just left the room, and would I let him be carried to prison if I could help it? It would not be a good place to be in while the insurrection they talked of was going on, and once in prison on charge of aiding the rebels, it would not be easy to get out till all was quiet again, and who could say to-night when that might be? Lesbia, do you think I was wrong to hold my hands over my lips to keep myself from speaking, and so let the minutes pass that might have changed all?"

"You were obeying him," said Lesbia. "I don't think I could have done it; but I believe I should have known I ought to obey."

"It was not from obedience," Ellen said; "I thought of Connor. Pelham had told me a little time before that if he was arrested on that charge and convicted—and those very papers would have convicted him—he would be——"

"Yes, I know, John said the same," cried Lesbia, shuddering; "but if the papers are so dangerous, and

Pelham will never give up the author of them, will not the whole of the danger come on him?"

"But Connor may escape from the country; and since Pelham is innocent he will stand a better chance on his trial than Connor could. I was able to think of all that, for the time seemed very long while Pelham was away in the inner room with mamma, and while the kind-looking sergeant stood by my chair pleading with me. Darby O'Roone grew impatient at last, and began to swear at the delay, and then Pelham came back and said he was ready to start. The wretch Darby reminded the policemen that they had brought handcuffs, and that they had before them a long, dark ride to Ballyowen, through a country where a very little effort on the part of Pelham's friends would make it easy for him to escape; but the English sergeant gave Darby a look of contempt that ought to have made him wither up into the reptile he is at heart, and said he would trust the gentleman, and then he went with Pelham himself to the stable to saddle Pelham's horse. I hastily packed up a few necessaries in a travelling bag and ran outside and gave it to him just as he was riding away. He told me to take care of myself, and of mamma, and to trust for help to Mr. Thornley, and then he began to say something about you, but O'Roone came up and cut short our farewell. I watched them to the turn of the road. The policemen had lanterns, and I could see them moving on and on to the very end. I almost forgot (I am so used to watching Pelham to that point) that it would do mamma no good to know he was safe so far on such a journey as this one. Poor mamma! Pelham's words had acted like a spell on her, compelling her to be quiet; he has such influence over her; but I don't think she realised that he was really going away till I came back alone. I felt very powerless to comfort her. It was a terrible night, much like in painfulness to another I have to look back upon in my life. I felt very wicked while it lasted, as if God had deserted us and let everyone be against us; but better thoughts came with the light, and now you have come bringing the love that shames me for my hard thoughts, and ought to teach me never to lose faith again. Did your brother know you were coming to us?"

"Know? why of course he did. He has gone to Ballyowen to remonstrate with the magistrates, and you may be sure, Ellen, he will never rest till he has done all that is possible. He said he might have to go to Dublin to get permission to communicate with Pelham and secure his being fairly treated."

"This will surely comfort mamma. I hear her stirring now. Go in to her, Lesbia. She shall see your bright face when she opens her eyes, and hear your good news before desponding thoughts have time to come back."

"And while I talk to her, had you not better prepare everything for leaving this house as soon as she is dressed? The thought of being on the way to him will best help her to bear up, I know. John said I was to bring you both back to Castle Daly for the night, and to-morrow she and I will go on to Galway, and when we come back——"

"You think you shall bring him with you?"

"I will never go back to Castle Daly unless he is free to go there too if he likes. Ellen, it is not my house any more. I don't feel as if I had anything now but the one thing—that is everything to me. I am going to tell your mother that she is to come to-night to her own house. You will feel that it is hers, and yours, and his—not mine—won't you? or I shall never believe you love me."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"You're my friend—

What a thing friendship is, world without end!"

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

FOUR days had passed since Lesbia's drive to Eagle's Edge, and Ellen was again at the Hollow watching by Anne O'Flaherty's sick-bed. There had been a change for the worse in the invalid's state, and it was now only at rare intervals that she could bear conversation or notice those around her. Ellen's time was divided between ministering to her wants and sitting silent beside her, gazing at the dear face that was beginning to take the appearance of an empty shell, from which the animating spirit was gradually

being withdrawn. She had hardly any news of those she was anxious about. Castle Daly and Eagle's Edge were both deserted. Mr. Thornley was in Dublin, and Lesbia and Mrs. Daly were staying at an hotel in Galway, seeing nothing of Pelham, and unable to get tidings of him, but preferring to wait Mr. Thornley's return in his neighbourhood than elsewhere. Murdock Malachy had mysteriously disappeared from the Hollow since Ellen's last visit, and the household's supply of letters and newspapers depended on Peter Lynch's consenting to abandon for an hour or so his favourite seat on the horse-block in the stable-yard, and going to fetch them from Ballyowen. It was difficult in these days to persuade him to stir from his self-chosen post, where, as he said, he was ready to take orders, when the turn of the illness came and his mistress sent for him. He had not seen Miss O'Flaherty for a fortnight, he pleaded, when Ellen came from the sick-room to argue the point with him, and there would be a power of things for him to tell her and consult her about when the strength came back to her all on a suddint, and she asked for him. It would never do for him to be out of the way and disappoint her just when she wanted him again. Anxious as she was for letters, Ellen had not the heart during these last days of watching to send Peter away, even for a few hours, seeing as she did how the old obstinate determination to believe only what he chose was passing out of his set wooden face, leaving it wan and weak, with an imploring, frightened look in the eyes, such as a child turns towards a dark room it fears to be forced to enter. He might be wanted on a sudden soon, though not for the cause he expected, and Ellen thought he had as much right as any one to wait about on the chance of one more word. Dr. Lynch, too, had absented himself, without sending any explanation of his absence. There seemed no avenue by which tidings could come, any more than if the little rivulet that surrounded the house, whose babbings and ripples were the chief disturbers of the unusual silence, had suddenly swelled into a wide ocean, cutting the household off from the rest of the world. Yet, as the days crept by, a vague apprehension of what was going on outside did ooze into the valley, and reached even as far as the watchers by Anne's dying-bed. There

were whispers repeated from one to another, and faces that had hitherto only worn an expression of anxiety or expectation began to look dark. At last one day one of the little maidens appeared in Anne's room with a face swollen with crying, and on inquiry it came out that she had been to chapel in a distant village, and some one had told her that Murdock Malachy had been shot in a fight there had been down in the south. That was all Ellen heard for twenty-four anxious hours. Then all at once everybody was talking; even Peter Lynch's tongue was loosed, and men and women came up to the Lodge from the valley, and from the solitary farms among the hills, to tell the news, of which the air was full, and question Miss Eileen, as if she could explain tidings that seemed to have stunned them. It was all over: Smith O'Brien was taken prisoner, and there had been no fighting at all, only a tumult in which one or two of the boys had been shot, and the rest had run away, leaving the leaders to take care of themselves.

"To be sure," Ellen's informants generally concluded, "the priests were agin it this time, and how would it prosper? The cause was lost anyhow, and the police and Mr. O'Roone would have it all their own way in the counthry, and what would they do at all? Could Miss Eileen tell them, when Miss O'Flaherty was dead, and Mr. Connor, and every one that hoped for better times put out of the way?"

From these whispered conferences Ellen tried to gather at least the consoling certainty that there had been little bloodshed, and she returned to her post by the sick-bed to watch for an interval of consciousness, when she might fulfil her promise of letting Anne know all to the last. *She* would be able to rejoice heartily in this determination to all her fears, and would not share the blank surprise and shame that troubled Ellen when she compared the high expectations and purposes of which she had been told with this *denouement*, and thought, with bitter grudging, of the young lives that had wrecked themselves in the mists of so miserable a delusion. On the evening of the fifth day Dr. Lynch came into Anne's room and proceeded to ask after her health and talk to her nurses as if there had been no break in his visits. Anne opened

her eyes at the sound of his voice, and a look of intelligence and inquiry came back into her face.

"Have you anything to tell me?" she asked feebly.

"Nothing at all," he answered in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone, "but that there is a better end to all their folly than might have been expected; and those for whom you care most are in no worse predicament than they were a week ago."

Anne looked satisfied; but when his business in the sick-room was ended, Dr. Lynch beckoned Ellen to follow him out of the room, and a dread seized her that there was worse to hear than he had dared to tell his patient.

"Was it truth you told her? Do you know really nothing worse of Connor than you did last week?" she asked as soon as they were out of hearing.

"Would I have told her a lie do you think, when we won't have her many more hours with us? Don't frighten yourself, Miss Ellen, I have nothing worse for you than you know already, but as I chanced to be in it all the time, I thought you'd like to hear the little there is to be said."

"Indeed I should!"

"Come into the turret room, then."

"Do you mean that you have been to Tipperary with Smith O'Brien and the insurrectionists?" Ellen began.

"I thought you disapproved—"

"Of course I did not go with a pike over my shoulder. I have not lived in the world sixty years, and travelled twice round it, to make a fool of myself in my old age; but there were people looking on who kept clear of the fighting, such as it was, and I was one of them; though, as you may suppose, I did not leave my duty here for the purpose of seeing a party of my countrymen make a pitiful spectacle of themselves before all Europe."

"But why then were you there?"

"It was a thought took me, a notion that came into my mind when I saw your mother the morning after Pelham was arrested. I was always one for laying schemes to outwit people for their good. And as I rode away from Eagle's Edge, heartsore that day at the sight of the trouble you were in, a plot suggested itself to me that beat everything for ingenuity, I thought. 'Why should not one

brother's danger be made the means of saving the other from worse ill than he has brought himself into already,' I said to myself. And I resolved to follow Connor, and if possible get speech of him before he had come up with the fighting, which that morning's lying newspaper said was going on fiercely in the South. If I can keep him from being actually seen with arms in his hands, I may save his neck, I thought; and I planned to put it to him that his brother was in danger, and his mother breaking her heart on his account, and that he was bound to come back without delay and deliver himself up as the writer of the papers that had inculpated Pelham. Knowing the generous temper of the lad I had to deal with, I had good hope I should have him safe in my own keeping before twenty-four hours were over, and then I thought we would settle on the next step to be taken at our leisure. That was on the Thursday morning; and strive as I would, I could not get off from Ballyowen till evening, for of course, when I got back, my house was surrounded with people wanting me, and I had to make arrangements for bad cases before I set out. I reached Tipperary on Friday morning, and all Friday I was driving about from place to place, hearing always that there was a crowd of people with arms in front of me; some said two thousand men, some three, some a few hundred; and that the club leaders from Dublin were among them, haranguing them every now and then, and trying to spirit them up to think themselves an army. At one place I heard they had stopped a regiment of soldiers on their march, but let them pass after all; and then again there was a story of their having seized a quantity of arms, but that did not turn out to be true. I passed Friday night at a little inn in Ballingarry, and in the morning set forth again with a fresh car and horse, and about the middle of the day sure enough I came up with what I was looking for, but too late to do any good. When I was about a quarter of a mile off I saw a crowd surrounding a tall white house on a common, and though it was a cloudy, drizzling day I once caught a chance gleam of reflected sunshine that told me they were carrying steel among them—pikes and scythes and pitchforks, and here and there a few bayonets! It was all confusion and din when

I got nearer, but I left my car on the outskirts of the throng and pushed my way into the thick of it, thinking that if any fighting did come off here, there might be something for me to do by and by. The windows of the white house were full of green-coats, and the crowds with pikes appeared to be besieging the house, trying to make them come out and give up their arms, but nobody seemed to know exactly what was intended, and neither party liked to fire first. I noticed a tall man, who was pointed out to me as Mr. Smith O'Brien, come again and again to the windows of the house and then turn and speak to the people, but whether he urged them to attack or keep the peace, I could not say. There were several other young fellows better dressed than the rest trying to put some order into the crowd, and among them I soon espied the two I was in search of. They were well in front, among the small innermost circle, who for the most part carried arms and had more purpose in their faces than the gaping ragged outsiders, and even if I could have forced my way to them and made them listen to me it would have been too late for what I wanted—they had done the worst for themselves they could do. While I stood watching, the first shot was fired, and a volley of stones hurled against the windows, and after that, for about half an hour or so, a brisk exchange of shot went on. I stayed long enough to see that our two were foremost in everything. There was an attempt made to set fire to the door of the house in order to smoke out the garrison and force them to surrender or fight outside. I saw Connor followed by one or two more run across the inclosed space behind the house and come back with arms full of hay and straw which they piled against the back door. Murdock Malachy was helping—that was the last I saw of the poor fellow unhurt. Some of the garrison within perceived what was being attempted, and fired a volley from the upper windows at the incendiaries. They scattered and came back to the attempt several times, and in the surging backwards and forwards of the crowd, I got shoved aside, and thinking it as well to give a wide berth to the shots that were just then flying pretty thickly close to the house, I retreated among the rabble of women who had gathered outside the low garden wall, and who were wringing their

hands and hullabalooing, calling to the boys they knew in the fight to come away and not make their homes more desolate than they were already. While I was there I heard my name called, 'Dr. Lynch, can that be you?' and turning round I saw O'Donnell staggering up to the wall, through the throng, with some one in his arms. 'Yes,' I said, 'it's me,' and I had my heart in my mouth, for I could only see a figure lying across his breast, with an arm over his shoulder, and I thought of Connor at once. 'Then it's a lucky chance that brought you,' O'Donnell answered. 'Here's work for you, the first of the boys that's down yet, the poor lad Malachy, he's breathing still, help me with him over the wall, that he may not be trampled to death in the throng here. He has a bullet in him, I am afraid. It was aimed full at Connor as he stooped to put a light to the little bonfire we had piled up yonder, and if poor Murdock had not started forward at the moment; and thrust his shoulder in the way, it's Connor who would have got it. I think myself he knew what he was about, poor boy, and did it on purpose; anyhow tell them about it at home, and do what you can for him. I must go back.' There were plenty of hands put out to lift the body over the wall, and help me to carry it to the next field out of the way of the tumult, and some of the women ran to a cabin a little way off to fetch water; but I soon saw there was nothing to be done!"

"Poor Murdock! was he dead?"

"The bullet had entered just between the shoulder-blades and come out at the throat. It could be only a question of a few minutes, and I did not think he would ever speak again: but he did. As we were bathing his forehead and putting some whisky to his lips there was a minute's consciousness, and he looked full at me. 'Mr. Connor,' he said.

"'Yes, my poor fellow,' I answered. 'He's all right; you saved him, I believe, and got this instead of him.'

"'He was always good to me,' he answered, 'and maybe some day I'll see him and Miss Eileen agin in a better place than Ireland will ever be, when all's done.'

"There was no more talking after that, for the blood rose in his throat and choked him, and I had to lay him

down from my arms on the ditch side, for some one called me just then to help a poor fellow who had been pushed out of the crowd with a broken arm."

"But Connor—did you see nothing more of Connor or of D'Arcy? How do you know they were not killed or wounded after poor Murdock left them?"

"By having seen pretty nearly all who were hurt. There was only one other boy killed besides Murdock, and I saw him lying stark among the cabbages when all was over—a tall, lank, famine-stricken shape that would have died of another day's tramp, if a bullet had not found him out and saved him the trouble of going further. There was a withered hag, though, and a couple of skeleton children to hullabaloo over him. To think of clever lads like Connor and D'Arcy, to say nothing of a sober gentleman of forty like Mr. Smith O'Brien, proposing to stand up against England with an army composed of material like that."

"But how did it end? Did they go on fighting?"

"For twenty minutes or so longer there was an exchange of shots, and then they began to come all from one side. The crowd of insurgents was melting away gradually. About the middle of the afternoon a reinforcement of police marched up the road fronting the house, and at sight of them the remnant of the people scattered, leaving their leaders almost alone. There were no prisoners taken, however,—that I saw. The police entered the house to join their comrades, and the late attackers were allowed to ride off in parties of twenties and tens across the common. For a little while the place was quiet again, except for the ragged women and children that hung about—crooning over the two dead bodies. I went back to where poor Murdock lay, and had his body removed to a cabin near before dark."

"And you don't really know any more of Connor?"

"No; to follow him, or inquire about him would have been to draw attention to him. We know that the leaders separated before night. O'Brien was arrested on his way to Limerick, but the others, less conspicuous, seem to have reached their destinations, and we will hope by this time are over the sea. D'Arcy O'Donnell has friends in Galway, and I think he told me once a foster-brother among the

Claddagh fishers. He could not have a safer hiding-place than among them, or one from which he could more conveniently get off to America."

"When shall we know?"

"When we get a letter from the other side of the sea to say they are safe in New York. Don't wish to hear of them sooner; they are in a very different position now from what I believed them to be in when I thought of bringing Connor back. After their conduct that miserable day on the common at Boughlah, we should have to fear the very worst for them if they were taken. Let us pray as the best hope we have that we may not see their faces again, poor boys, for years.

"And Pelham?"

"It certainly won't tell in his favour that his brother has made himself so conspicuous as a rebel; but once we are assured that Connor is safe in America, Pelham's defence will be comparatively easy. Nothing can be brought against him but the possession of those papers, and we shall have no scruples about bringing people to show their true authorship then."

"Yet I believe if Connor knew this minute where Pelham was, he would come back."

"It would be like his rashness; but I trust he will not know; wherever he is now he won't be likely to put himself forward to inquire for news. I hope he has money enough to get across."

"Poor, poor Murdock Malachy! I am not thinking as much as I ought of his devotion to Connor. How it would touch Anne if we could tell her. Does it not seem strange that if only two were to fall in the attempt she has been dreading for so many months, one should come from her people?"

"I made the best arrangements I could for a decent burial for him, knowing she would wish it. A strange thought came into my mind as I stood looking at his body, after it was laid out. I thought of the old custom of killing the favourite servants over a chieftain's grave, that he might have people to wait on him, to his mind, in the other world; and I could not help a sort of satisfaction coming over me as I said to myself,—at all events there'll be one of hers waiting for her when she gets over

the river. It would be comfortable for the two of them, if it was permitted to them to fall into anything like their old relationship to each other up there, and Murdock would not have to serve alone for long. My poor cousin Peter will soon follow him. I don't believe he'll be long for this world when once he lets himself believe that his mistress is really dying. I'll go and have a word with him now."

The strange thought came back into Ellen's mind in the evening, as she stood in the bay window of Anne's favourite turret room, delaying to shut out the light of the harvest moon, that had grown now to a shapely silver boat, whose reflection made a faint glimmer in the river. The house within was very still and empty. Its owner, to whom in past times all the life and enjoyment in it had been due, was now lying upstairs helpless and unconscious: the body at least helpless—the spirit ebbing slowly away from its old abiding place: to what conditions? Would any of the old links re-form themselves? Would Murdock and the many poor neighbours who had gone from Anne's valley in the famine years—people whom she had protected and governed—would they be able to meet her with thanks and greetings in the fresh existence? Would she still look to them like a queen worthy of their allegiance? Perhaps those old sacrifices of which Dr. Lynch had reminded her were not prompted by savagery and selfish pride alone; there might have been true love in them—a sort of necessity even, in the days when service was not altogether an arbitrary thing, but was, sometimes, at least, the complete loyal giving up of the lower, weaker natures to the stronger and higher natures, who ruled them and gave their lives shape and meaning.

As these thoughts crowded in Ellen's mind, her eye wandered over the landscape almost without seeing anything, and then suddenly perception of what was before her came back with a start, and a thrill went through her as she remembered that, for about a minute, she had been watching the approach of a man's figure to the head of the bridge, and now perceived that he was moving along with the limping gait that had always distinguished Murdock Malachy. She did not scream, but she sat

down breathless on the window-sill. The faint light made everything shadowy and ghost-like. It might be her imagination, occupied with thoughts of Murdock, that created the image, yet it came steadily on and grew more solid-looking at every step. In the shadow of the house it became a black, undistinguishable form; but it drew close to the window, leaned its arms on the sill, and said in a low voice, that Ellen recognised at once:

"Anne, is that you? Will you take me in, as you did once before, when I ran away and surprised you here at the window?"

"Connor! dear, dear Connor! it is not Anne; it is I, Ellen. How could you come back here, to put yourself in danger of being seen by O'Roone?"

"Go round to the door and let me in, and I'll tell you all about it. I'm too tired and faint and dead-beat altogether to jump through the window now."

"And hurt; are you hurt?—you walk lame."

"Only footsore: and, at all events, before morning comes, and I present myself to old O'Roone to save him the pleasure of sending for me, we'll have had our talk out, and I'll have seen Anne again, and supped off a Happy-go-lucky fish-pie once more."

"Where's D'Arcy?" Ellen asked, as soon as she had brought Connor in, and shut the door of the room behind him.

"In Galway to-night; but before forty-eight hours are over, he'll be on the sea on his way to America I hope."

"And oh, Connor! why are not you with him? How could you come back here to break all our hearts with fear for you?"

"You ask me that, and you know where Pelham is now; and Ellen, you know, too, as well as I do, that my mother had rather a thousand times that I came to grief altogether than that his little finger ached. Do you think I could live free out there, and let him be ruined on my account, and she perhaps cursing me for what I had brought on him? I have made a mess of my life altogether, and may as well come to an end and let luckier people have their chance."

"Connor, you are unjust to mamma and forget all the rest of us, when you speak like that."

"Well, well, don't let us argue about it. I've made up my mind, and I'm too done-up for an argument now. Let me sit down, and give me something to eat and drink. I would not like to come before old O'Roone to-morrow looking too much like a victim, for all that's come and gone; one may as well die one way as another if one puts a bold face on it to the last; and anyhow I'll give myself up of my own good will. I won't be taken or betrayed, as has chanced to better men than me this year."

"No one would betray you here," Ellen said, eagerly catching at the word. "We might easily hide you for a week or so in Good People's Hollow, till we see what happens. You need be in no hurry to give yourself up."

"But I am in a hurry, Eileen aroon. Don't argue with me; I told you I was dead-beat, dear; and it's a comfort to see some plain thing to do when all one has looked forward to and believed in has crumbled to pieces under one's feet, and one hardly knows where one is standing."

"How did you hear about Pelham?"

"A Galway boy, who had seen Pelham taken to prison, came to the place where D'Arcy and I were hiding, and told me all; and another fellow brought me word this morning that he had just seen our mother and Lesbia standing among the miserable crowd round the prison doors trying to get in, and that they were sent away weeping, the two of them. That was enough. I talked it over with D'Arcy, and though we were sorry to part, he said I was right, and acknowledged that he should be glad enough to have such an excuse for giving it all up and making an end. He would have gone with me to the authorities in Galway if I'd have let him; but I persuaded him to stay and take his chance, and I had set my heart on another look at the Hollow, and a night of chat with you, Eileen aroon, and on the satisfaction of seeing with my own eyes the look of baffled spite that will come on the faces of the two O'Roones when I show them that they will have to loose their hold on Pelham; so I came here. To sit in this window-seat again was well worth the walk, and I mean to enjoy the fish-pie when you get it me, I can tell you. Only don't argue with me, avourneen; I'm not in the humour for that."

The playful, coaxing smile that lighted up Connor's

pale face at the last words was too much for Ellen; she hurried from the room to fetch the refreshments that she saw were so much needed, and as she hastily got them together, racked her brain to think of some expedient for detaining Connor till Dr. Lynch or John Thornley could see him and try to dissuade him from his purpose. She debated within herself whether to call up one of the servants and despatch a summons to Dr. Lynch to come to-night; but she decided it would be too great a risk. Ballyowen was full of strange policemen and soldiers, and a large reward had been offered for Connor's arrest, and some one even of their own people might be found base enough to think it a pity that so large a sum should be lost by a voluntary surrender. Ellen knew Connor well enough to be convinced that it would be a great additional pang to him to be balked of his self-surrender, and she thought it better to trust to her own persuasions than risk inflicting such a wound as betrayal at the last would be. She had had previous experience of Connor in moods of deep despondency following on great excitement, and she could not help hoping that, after refreshment and rest, she should find him more persuadable. As the evening passed on, however, and the conversation between them was prolonged, she was obliged to acknowledge to herself that for once his resolution was too firmly rooted for any words of hers to shake it. He had been wholly unprepared for the events of the last few days, and the downfall to his expectations had been so great a shock as to make him loose his hold on hope, and turn from the future with loathing. There was keen remorse, too, for the share he had had in deluding Murdock and the young men of the neighbourhood who were now in prison with Pelham. They spoke long of Murdock, and Connor was deeply touched when Ellen repeated his last words.

"He would not have blamed me or lost faith in me, poor fellow, even if he had lived to see what a failure it was. I don't believe that any of them will, even if they are sent with common felons across the sea and never see Ireland again; but I begin to see it is a terrible thing we have done. We made a world for ourselves of our own hopes and dreams, and brought them to act in it."

"Then don't you think," said Ellen eagerly, "that you

are bound to live to undo the harm you have done? Does not Murdock's death, that bought your life, bind you to some service for Ireland before you die? We don't see yet what it is to be, or how it could be rendered, but the call may come."

"But death may serve as well as life. Patriots' blood is just as much the seed of nationality as martyrs' of the Church. D'Arcy has always said that the power of standing by each other in misfortune is what we want above all, and if I give an example of *that* to the death, I shall have done something. You may call it laziness if you like, but it's just all I've strength left for. And talking of laziness, dear, this sofa is very comfortable; I think I'll just lie down and go to sleep, and you may come and call me in the morning. I daresay I'll sleep till the sun's well up, for it's long since I've had a quiet night, or such a bed as this to sleep on; and as I said before, I don't want to look like a victim when I give myself up. My plan is to ride to old O'Roone's door just when the family are sitting down to breakfast, and to walk into the breakfast-room with a flower in my button-hole, and a gay 'good morning' and hand-shake to all the ladies round, as free and easy as if I had come to take Darby out fishing or shooting with me, as I used to do in the days when the little sneak was glad enough and proud enough to go wherever I whistled him. Then I shall put my hand on Darby's shoulder. 'I've brought you a present of 200*l.* of blood money this morning,' I'll say. 'Who's fitter to have it than your father's son, since it's the last fraction of money that's to be squeezed out of the Dalys, and your father has had such a large share of what's gone before? It's a drop in the ocean, to be sure, compared with Miss Maynard's fortune, but since you'll have to leave that to Pelham now, you may as well make what you can of me.' Won't he be savage! The story'll stick to him for the rest of his life."

"Oh, Connor, how can you take pleasure in planning such things, when you know the serious part that must follow?"

"Surely you don't grudge me any pleasure there is to be got out of it? We've had the serious part over and over half the night, and it has made you as pale as a sheet, my

poor darling. Go to bed, mavourneen, and wake me just in time not to miss the breakfast scene. Mrs. O'Roone and the young ladies never come down till ten o'clock, and then in their curl papers. Don't I know the ways of the place, and the shocked looks they'll put on at my coming in, rebel as I am, and seeing them in *deshabille*? Sleep all you can."

Connor was still fast asleep on the sofa when Ellen stole into the turret room early the next morning, and, to prevent any of the servants coming into the room, began to busy herself in preparing the breakfast. She set Anne's little tea table with her favourite breakfast service, and opening the casement, let in the fresh morning air, and still Connor did not open his eyes. He looked more like himself this morning, now he had eaten and slept. His face was thinner than it had been a few days before, but the colour was coming back into it, and there was more life there even with his eyes closed, and the long lashes resting on his cheeks, than there had been yesterday evening. It was impossible to connect that young fair, pleasant face with the thought of a shameful death. "To be hanged by the neck till he was dead!" Oh, Connor, Connor, who had always been the mirth of the house, whose gay voice and smile had warmed every heart in the country round! Surely Ellen thought there could not be found a judge in all Ireland with the heart to pronounce sentence on him.

Ellen stood for a long time looking at him, turning every now and then to wipe away the tears that obscured the vision and marred its beauty. Even if the very worst were averted, she knew there was nothing but long separation to look forward to. The best they could pray for, as Dr. Lynch had said, was that they might not see the boys' bright faces again for years, not until middle age had set its seal upon them, and the brightness was gone.

Every half-hour of inaction seemed a gain, so she allowed the moments to slip by unnoticed as she took her fill of looking. At last a clock striking eight roused her.

"I will humour him in everything he wished this last morning," she said to herself, "whatever comes of it. I'll go out into the garden and gather the flower he talked

about for his button-hole, and then I'll wake him, and tell him we have only two hours more."

The garden was not in its usual trim since Peter Lynch had lost heart to work in it, but there was a blue and white passion flower in full bloom on the trellis by Anne's bedroom window, and Ellen went round the house to gather a blossom, thinking she would rather have that than anything else for her purpose. As she returned to the front door, which she had left open, she saw a man approaching the steps, and with beating heart she quickened her pace to intercept him before he could enter the house. It was James Morris, and at sight of her he turned back to meet her, and put a letter in her hand.

"It came to Castle Daly last night from Mr. Thornley, with orders to me to let you have it at once, wherever you might be."

"Wait here in the garden, please, James," Ellen said, "I will come out to you by and by."

For the first moment the letter did not seem to promise much interest; it could not affect the overwhelming trouble of this morning; but when she again stood by Connor's couch, a thought struck her which made her sink on her knees and feel she could only open it so. The note contained a few lines only, whose purport her eye took in at a glance:—

"In case you should not be with Lesbia when my full account reaches her, I send this note to be forwarded on to you. All is well. Pelham will be at liberty within a few hours of your reading this. I have seen the Lord Lieutenant, and have in my possession an order signed for his release. I went armed with proofs of O'Roone's misconduct and misapplication of public money during the famine that were considered enough to discredit his actions in other matters. I shall be in Galway a few hours after my letter, and will bring Pelham back with me to Castle Daly.

"Always yours,

"J. THORNLEY."

The revulsion of feeling was almost too much. Ellen let the letter fall on the ground, and dropped her face between her hands, as her whole soul went up to Heaven in an intense thanksgiving. Connor stirred on the sofa before she

had finished her prayer, and when she looked up he was awake, and had raised himself on one elbow, and was looking towards the open window. She waited in silence for a few minutes to watch him, as she might have watched one restored from the dead. A pathetic look stole into his face, as he gazed out at the fair scene bathed in sunshine.

"By Jove," he said, slowly turning to her at last. "How beautiful everything is this morning. I did not know before the half of how beautiful it all was. Well, I'm glad it's a fine day for my last ride. I could not have had a better last look at the country, could I? The next time the sun rises I won't see it. I'll be in prison, but Pelham will be free, and my mother satisfied with me. There was something my father said when he was dying about being satisfied. What was it, Ellen?"

"Connor, Connor, listen, avourneen, listen, and let's go down on our knees and bless God together. Pelham *will* be free by to-morrow morning; but there's no need for you to put yourself in his place. Read what has come for you at your waking, darling."

Connor took the letter which Ellen picked up from the ground and read it slowly twice over without speaking, his changeful face showing the strong emotions that stirred him as he read. Ellen threw her arms round him as he finished his second perusal, and for a few minutes they kissed and clung together in their old, childish fashion of celebrating meetings or reconciliations; with half articulate words of love and joy, and thankfulness whispered to each other, and with tears wetting the two faces, that would not, they knew through all their joy, often touch again.

"I'll tell you just what it all comes to, Eileen aroon," Connor said at last, raising his head from her shoulder, and smiling through the tears he was trying to wink away. "I'll tell you just what it means. You'll have to marry him, for he has saved my neck to-day: saved me from hanging, and I don't see how you are to have the heart to refuse him what he's worked so hard for. It is that—that and nothing else, I schemed to bring about, one day, long ago, when poor Murdock broke his thigh, and James Morris and I spirited away Pelham's dog to Dennis's old still. That was the fate that hung on our doings little as we knew it. The Thornleys coming to Ireland, your

marrying an Englishman, and Pelham's getting an English heiress for his wife. Ah, yes, and it was the end of the reign of the Dalys in Connemara we brought about, too, for Pelham will have to take her name, and he will rechristen the castle, you may depend. It's the way things go with us. Whatever is worth anything in the old country, the English get hold of. I think you are about the best thing in the green isle, avourneen, and an Englishman will get you, after all, and I can't quarrel with the way in which he's won you. If all the conquests over us were made in the same fashion we would have to hold our tongue, and not complain whatever we lost."

"But you don't know about that one conquest yet," said Ellen, blushing crimson, as she turned her eyes away from the keen question in his. "You don't know what I'll do yet; perhaps hold myself ready to follow you to America, with all cousin Anne's people, when you send us word you have got a new Good People's Hollow ready for us on the other side of the sea."

"Ay, and when D'Arcy has made a place and a name for himself out there that will make people turn round to look after his cousin."

"It does me good to hear you say that, Con, dear. Life and hope are coming back to you, now you begin to weave schemes again for him. But what you said of James Morris just now reminds me that he is waiting outside the door all this time, and that I had better go and send him away."

"No; bring him in. James Morris out there! How lucky. He's the very boy I'd have sent for from all the others in the world, to help me to get back to Galway before the ship that's to take D'Arcy to America sails. I could not manage the walk a second time, to say nothing of the chance of being arrested on the way. But James is the boy with the quick wit to help us to see what's to be done."

Ellen ran to call James in, and Connor met him at the door of the turret room with outstretched hands, somewhat to the embarrassment of the smart young footman in Miss Maynard's correct livery, who had undergone four years of Bride Thornley's training in man-servant's manners.

"What! are you above shaking hands with a rebel?"

Connor exclaimed. "It's for the last time, my lad. There, that's right; I thought you weren't Thornleyized to such a point as to forget your old master's ways, who comes this morning to put his life between your two hands. Do you remember the evening, Jim, when we contrived together, you and I, and stole a dog from its owner? and will you be able to manage as cleverly, do you think, to steal a rebel from those who are hunting him to prison and death? He is worth two hundred pounds, you must know, to any one who pleases to sell him."

"I'd not like to see the boy who was willing to earn *that* money, Mr. Connor," said James in a low tone of strong feeling, and trembling with emotion as he clasped Connor's hands. "I'd not like to think of the kind of life he would lead here who had your blood-money on his head. It would not be a long one, sir, any way; I'd see to that myself."

"Hush! hush! Jim," cried Ellen; don't let us speak of such a terrible thing as Connor being taken. What we have to do is to give our best thoughts to the question of how to get him safely away. No one knows of his being here, as yet, but myself and you. Shut the door and let us consult together." The result of the conference was a resolution that the secret of Connor's visit to the Hollow should be kept between the three to whom it was now known, and that Connor should pass the day in a light closet within Anne's bedroom, from which all intruders could be excluded without suspicion being excited. In the evening James proposed to return with a suit of his own clothes for Connor, who was to put them on, and walk with him across the hills to the boat-house on the river, where one of Miss Maynard's pleasure boats was kept. There Ellen, who was to set out some hours earlier, and take a different route, was to meet them. Miss Maynard's livery was well known in the neighbourhood, and they thought that the most vigilant constable they were likely to come across would not trouble himself to look curiously at two of Miss Maynard's servants, amusing themselves by an evening stroll or by an hour's fishing on the river. Once in the boat they could glide gradually down the river till they reached the head of the lake, then through the narrow channel past Castle Daly out into the wide waters

of Lough Corrib, where they could put on greater speed, and might hope to enter Galway harbour through Friar's Cut, early in the morning and reach the emigrant ship before she sailed with the morning tide. If Connor could reach her all would be well, for the captain was a friend of D'Arcy, and had agreed to receive the two friends on board. The conference broke up hastily at the sound of Peter Lynch's voice in the garden. Ellen thought it better not to let him know what had happened, as he was sure to take objection against any plan that originated with James Morris, and could not now be trusted not to betray his thoughts by mutterings and moanings to every one who came near him. To avoid arousing his curiosity she hastily dismissed James and took Connor upstairs to his hiding place within Anne's room, where he was to await the hour of sunset. The day, Connor's last day in Ireland, fraught with danger and suspense as every hour of it was, seemed both to him and Ellen to pass with painful rapidity. The greater part of it Connor spent by Anne's bedside, seated on a chair near her, and holding her hand in his. She did not seem at all surprised to see him. Whenever she woke up from a doze, and her eyes fell on him, a smile of pleasure played round her lips; but when she exerted herself to talk her thoughts wandered to past times, and she seemed sometimes to mistake Connor for his father, and recur to recollections of childish days, and sometimes to confuse the circumstances of this visit with those of the time when he had come to the Hollow just before the first break-up of the household at Castle Daly. Yet, through all her unconnected fancies there ran predominant the thought of a journey awaiting both herself and Connor.

"We are leaving the valley together," she said once or twice, "stepping westward."

And once, when her lips went on moving for some time, Ellen stooped down and caught a verse of a poem of Wordsworth — a special favourite of Anne, which they had often read together—

"The dewy ground was dark and cold
Behind, all dreary to behold,
And stepping westward seemed to be,
A kind of Heavenly Destiny."

"It is her blessing and prophecy of good to you, Connor, dear," she said repeating the words to him with a sob in her voice and a smile. "She is past feeling the pain of parting, but she gives you that word of hope to take with you."

"Yes," Anne said in a firmer voice, "past everything but hope—within sight of where all is swallowed up in love."

Dr. Lynch came close upon the hour when Ellen was to set out on her walk to the river; and, after feeling Anne's pulse, he drew Ellen aside to tell her that his patient would hardly live through the night, and that the priest from the next village should be sent for at once. A hasty explanation of Connor's presence in the house and of the plan for his escape followed, and Dr. Lynch decided that they must take leave of Anne and quit the house before the priest and his attendant entered it. He would stay, he said, to the last. To leave her at such a moment was very bitter to Ellen. She and Connor went and knelt together by the bedside, and Anne, whose faculties had been aroused by the stir and bustle in the room, put her hands on their heads and blessed them.

"You must not weep and break my heart," she said, smiling. "You know the last good-bye must have come. This is but a few moments earlier."

"But oh! to leave you to die alone, with none of your own near you—that is the heart-break," sobbed Ellen.

"My dear, I shall not be alone," Anne whispered; "I shall be less alone than I have ever been in my life before. I have been lonely sometimes with all my own about me; but now, never again. The Friend is near who alone can walk with me through the Dark Valley."

Ellen choked back her tears, not to disturb the supreme peace that was settling on the beloved face she should not see again till it was stiff in death, and rising, pressed a long, farewell kiss on the pale lips, and turning away, left the room without venturing to look again. Connor followed immediately, and Ellen took him into the least frequented of the turret rooms to await James Morris's appearance with his disguise, while she herself set out on her walk across the hills. They were to take the shortest and she the longest route to the river; for it was important that

neither party should arrive at their destination long before the other, for fear of attracting observation while waiting about. For a few miles Ellen walked on mechanically, hardly able to keep her eyes free enough from blinding tears to see the path she was following, but by degrees the solemn beauty of the sunset on the hills began to exercise a soothing influence, and she grew calmer. The evening was perfectly calm; there would not be a ripple on the lake to hinder the rowers. On such an evening the boat voyage down Lough Corrib to Galway would be easily managed while the darkness lasted. If there had been a contrary wind it might have been impossible to make it in time to reach the vessel before she sailed. As yet all looked well; the evening was closing in gently, the shadows crept further and further and grew darker in the valleys, and hardly a leaf stirred; the little lakes scattered between the hills reddened and whitened again, and lay glimmering coldly like still sheets of frosted silver; the sunset glow had faded everywhere but on the tops of the highest hills when Ellen reached the boat-house. She was the first to arrive, and had two hours of anxious waiting. Sometimes she paced the road near the river, unable to rest; and then, fearing to attract notice, she forced herself to sit still in the shadow of the boat-house. No one passed but a girl driving a cow to its pasture and a gossoon with the Castle Daly post-bag on his back whistling a gay tune as he ran. He had run just so last night, Ellen thought, with the news that was worth Connor's life behind him. But what did the delay mean? Could James Morris possibly have failed them? Could they have been stopped on the way? Just as the wonder began to grow into an agony of apprehension, the two figures her eyes had long been straining to see emerged out of the dark distance and rapidly approached her.

"All right," Connor's voice cried when they were a yard or two distant, and Ellen noticed that already his voice had its old alacrity and cheer in it. Then, as they came close, he whispered in her ear, "We waited at the Hollow till nearly dark; for Morris has reason to think I was seen yesterday, and that the police are on the look-out to get hold of me; but the danger is nearly over now—once in the boat we'll do. I defy a stranger to get down the river

and across the head of the lake in our time, and they'll not find any of the boys who know the currents ready to help them. I'd undertake myself to keep a boat within sight of Hen's Castle all night rowing hard."

Morris had gone into the boat-house and now brought out Lesbia's trim little pleasure-skiff, in which they all took their places, Ellen at the helm, and Connor and James each taking an oar. They hardly spoke a word till they had left the river far behind them, and were half way across the head of the lake, nearing the narrow channel that opened into the wider waters, where they could feel themselves comparatively safe.

The moon had risen, and was tipping with silver the ruined turrets of the Witch's Castle as they passed the island; another ten minutes' rowing brought them opposite Castle Daly. There were lights in the windows, and the outline of the old house stood clear and dark against the star-strewn sky. Connor made a sign to James, and balancing their oars, they kept the boat stationary for a few seconds while he looked up, and Ellen felt as if a great cry of pain must burst out from her heart involuntarily, so sharp a pang of sympathetic sorrow shot through it, as she thought of all the recollections and regrets that must crowd themselves into that silent farewell. In a minute Connor dropped his oar into the water, and the sharp, splashing sound that followed always had an accent of regret in it to Ellen's ears whenever she heard it afterwards. No remark was made till they had entered the channel and lost sight of the Castle lights, and then Connor stooped forward and whispered to Ellen:

"James says they were to come back this evening—my mother and Lesbia and Pelham. They are in there now—happy, I hope. Well, tell her I went away wearing her livery (touching his coat-sleeve), her slave to the last. I'm glad of it. She did not believe I loved her, nor did you either; but I did. It was not all such a joke with me as you chose to fancy. I may have made a fool of myself sometimes, but there was the true thing under all. I hope they'll be very happy. Tell her and my mother that I would have done what you know of, if John Thornley had not been beforehand with me."

When they had left the channel they struck out to some

distance from the shore, and Ellen seemed to breathe more freely as the expanse of waters around them widened and widened out, making her feel shut in and sheltered between the brooding wings of night and the dividing waters. All night long the dip of the oars and the ripple of the waves against the sides of the boat kept up a question and an answer that she seemed to be trying to understand. It was not always of Connor and the parting close at hand that they seemed to speak; it was oftenest of Anne, whose voyage through the night with the dark waters of death over her head and the "sheltering arms" underneath her bearing her on to eternal sunrise, was frequently so present to Ellen's mind as to shut out all recollection of her own position. Sometimes, however, James and Connor broke the oppressive monotony of sound by taking up a song—one of the old boating-songs they used to sing in old times—and then Ellen gathered up all the power she had to an intensity of listening, that no clear fresh note of the sweet boyish voice—the voice she was never to hear singing again—should escape her ears. As the grey dawn crept up the sky the wind freshened a little, and Connor insisted on wrapping the greatcoat James had thoughtfully brought for him, round Ellen, who shuddered with cold.

"Never mind," James said, "it was a breath of the sea that had met them; and the neighbourhood of the sea meant freedom and safety close at hand—within their grasp—if, please God, no misfortune came at the last hour to snatch it from them."

The thought nerved them to fresh exertion, wearied as they were. Half an hour afterwards there was the sea—Galway harbour, with the Atlantic beyond, divided from them only now by the narrow channel that connects the lake with the bay, and still the sun had only just lifted its head, a fiery red ball, from the waters of the lake stretched out far behind them. They were in time. Connor soon pointed out to Ellen the emigrant ship lying beyond the harbour-bar which he had visited with D'Arcy, and where he was secure of reception if he could reach her unchallenged. Other little boats were putting out to her from the shore as they got clear of Friar's Cut—boats filled with emigrants and their friends who had kept together till the last, and were now in frantic haste to gain

the ship's side; for the signal had been hoisted that the anchor was under weigh. Their haste need excite no surprise. Ellen fancied she should feel quite happy when once she had seen Connor climb the side of the vessel and lose himself in the crowd that, early as was the hour, crowded her decks—he would be safe then. Yet, when they shot under the ship's bows, and the confused cries and discordant noises of departure rang in her ears, and Connor, putting down his oar, bent towards her and drew her face to his, it was as if the very bitterness of death had come with the last moment. Her head fell forward powerless on his breast, and James, raising it gently, called on Connor to make haste and get away before she awoke from unconsciousness. She did not hear the compassionate remarks passed round among the occupants of the other boats about the poor young servant lad whose sweetheart had fainted when he wished her good-bye, and she missed the sight of a face thrust over the ship's side that flushed with eager joy as Connor sprang up the ladder. She was conscious of nothing more till nearly half an hour afterwards, when she raised her head from the bottom of the boat where James had placed her, and saw in front of her a track of light on the dancing waves, and in the midst of it a ship with sails full set dropping down westward.

CHAPTER XL

Oh heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns,
For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.
Love is best.

"I CONFESS I don't understand on what grounds you two have come to such a sudden understanding without a word of consent from either of your guardians, madam. Don't you know that I can withhold every penny of your fortune for the next five years, if I please? Would it not have been better to propitiate me by making some show of deference, and honestly letting me know at least that it

was an accepted lover I was bringing to you from prison the first thing this morning? I ought to have had the choice, I consider; I might have preferred leaving him where he was, if I had known the extent of his pretensions. Nothing like a week in prison, it seems, for giving a shy man confidence."

"Oh, John, John, it has been such a happy morning. I did not think it possible for any one in the world to be so happy as I—as we are now, dear, dear John," and Lesbia, who had just emerged from an inner room where she and Mrs. Daly and Pelham had been closeted together for nearly two hours, nestled closely to her brother and laid her flushed cheek on his arm.

"Oh, yes, it's all very well to come coaxing me now after keeping me waiting here in the ante-room with my hands full of business, till you deigned to come and explain your and your young man's extraordinary behaviour on meeting this morning. Am I your guardian, or am I not? Can I stop the supplies if you marry without my consent, or can I not? That is what I want you to consider."

"Oh, John, I wish you would," said Lesbia, lifting up her head eagerly. "I believe it would be a great relief to him if I might come to him poor just at first. If I could have the years till I am three-and-twenty for living with him at Eagle's Edge, and waiting on them all, as I would; while he kept his own name that he values above all my money. If I might do that, nothing would be wanted to make our happiness perfect."

"A perfect little romance, I dare say, till you had tried it."

"John, it is not like you to believe only in the mean motives; but I see you are only joking. You *will* allow, won't you, that it is true love, and that he is making sacrifices for love of me? His name, that he has a right to be proud of, and the feeling so strong in him of dislike to owe his worldly prosperity to his wife; it is generous to give up all that for me."

"Oh, I can believe in any amount of unpractical Irish pride."

"And in higher feeling than pride, John."

"Well, come, then, to satisfy you I will confess. We had some conversation during our walk from the prison

here early this morning while you were asleep, not knowing what had come to pass; and I was very well satisfied with what I heard. He spoke of you in a very honest and manly way; and I acknowledge that he has behaved well in difficult circumstances throughout, and that he is a fine fellow. There, thank you, that will do; you had better reserve your kisses and raptures. I don't appreciate vicarious affection."

"But, John, indeed I am grateful."

"Oh, yes, I daresay; but you have not explained the manner of your meeting yet. Nothing he said gave me to understand that you were on such terms of mutual understanding as warranted——"

"You see it was so sudden, John, we had not heard a word from you."

"No, my letter was sent to Castle Daly, and will come back some time to-day, I suppose."

"To see him follow you into the room when we thought him in prison was such an overwhelming surprise and joy."

"But it hardly justified you in throwing yourself into his arms."

"Oh! I did not do that."

"Something rather like it, little one."

"I told you in one of my letters, did I not, about our meeting on the road?"

"You could not, I should suppose, have had much to say to each other on the road."

"Not to say; but, John, if you have ever cared for any one very much you will understand. One may go on doubting and doubting for years, and yet knowing underneath all the time, and then at once some little word or look makes, what had seemed only a thought before, become a reality for one's whole life. It would not need any more talking about."

"Then I must say you have wasted a great deal of time this morning. Only on the plea of *its* wanting a great deal of talking about can I excuse you for having kept me hanging about waiting for you two entire hours."

"You are only pretending to be angry, I see; and it has been such a happy time. Yes, certainly, we have talked. Mrs. Daly went upstairs to her own room on

purpose, and we had to go back and explain to each other; how it all grew up from the old times at Whitecliffe, when he began by being sorry for me, and doing me little services in secret; and when I found out that I could rely on his thoughtfulness and kindness, so much more securely than on Connor's, though he was so pleasant, and said so much. You would not grudge me the time, dear, if you only knew how happy it had been."

"That is a knowledge which you confidently believe me to be quite incapable of attaining to. It is a sealed book you have got open between your hands, and no one has ever had a glimpse into it before, I suppose."

"Not you, John. Of course, I don't mean to say that you may not care very much for some one. But there is such a difference when one *knows* it is a mutual caring. *That* makes it all solemn and real—then one begins to understand," said Lesbia, drawing up her head with a far-off indication of approaching wifely dignity.

"Oh, yes, I see," said John. "Then one understands the amazing selfishness that two people absorbed in each other can attain to. I can't say I much desire initiation into that mystery of human nature."

"Have I really been very selfish for keeping you?"

"Well, not very. I have some other prisoners, victims with Pelham, of O'Roone's spite, to look after; but if I could have done anything for them at this particular time I should not have waited. I was not thinking of myself. I was wondering how you two have contrived to forget other anxieties and other people's cares, and be as happy as you profess yourselves this morning. It does not seem to have occurred to you that Miss Daly, as far as you know, has not heard your good news yet, and may be suffering great anxiety for both her brothers."

"I thought you had written to her."

"I sent a hasty line to Castle Daly, and I hope she has it this morning, but we can't be sure. I must remain in Galway to complete my business; but I should have thought you would have been anxious to get back to Castle Daly as soon as possible."

"So we all are. Mrs. Daly only lingers in hope of getting news of Connor. Pelham has heard, through some of his fellow-prisoners, that Connor is hiding in Galway

waiting for an opportunity to get off to America, and we think that as soon as it is known Pelham is free, Connor will contrive through some of his confederates to communicate with us."

"He had better do nothing of the kind till he is fairly out of reach of the law. It would risk his own safety, and compromise Pelham over again. Any message he may leave behind him will find you out at Castle Daly, when he has made good his escape."

"I will tell them what you say, and Mrs. Daly will be as anxious to hurry our departure as you can be. Oh, John, dear, let me run away at once, there is Captain Pelham coming up the hotel steps. He has been to see us every day since we came here, and talks of nothing but of how many more rebel leaders have been taken prisoners, which makes Mrs. Daly very nervous. I must leave him to you to-day. I could not bear to see him just now."

"Comes to see you every day! why I thought you had dismissed him?"

"Oh, yes; but we have had an explanation. He has confessed that he sought my society chiefly because I let him talk of Connemara, and I have told him that I listened to him only because it was of Connemara he talked. The sisters were stupid and misunderstood, and for a little while made him believe I liked him, and that he was bound to ask me; but now we have been perfectly frank with each other, and are better friends than ever. I could not refuse to let him come and talk in the old strain of Connemara, or rather of Ellen Daly. Yes, I let him talk, but I don't encourage him, John, because I think of you. Such an idea as *you* for her has never entered into his head. He fears no one but the rebel cousin to whom some people say she is engaged: and he looks in the papers every day hoping to see that he is taken prisoner. He says it would be the best possible fortune for Ellen if her Irish cousin were taken and hanged, as he deserves; but I can't bear to have it said, for Pelham would not like it, so I will leave him to you to-day. Please go and meet him in the hall and take him off."

John was the less disposed to forgive Lesbia for thrusting the task of entertaining her quondam confidant upon him, when he found that there was no possibility of

civilly shaking off the young officer at the entrance of the hotel. Captain Pelham had come to while away a dull hour in talk with Lesbia, but as she was not to be had he was nearly as well pleased to get rid of the time by accompanying John wherever he might be going, and discussing with him the scraps of news in the morning papers he had already acquainted himself with.

"Two more of the club leaders taken by the police," he began. "Have you seen it? They were prowling about the roads near, and were spotted by the constables from their footsore condition and hang-dog looks. That's three of the gentlemen disposed of, whose tall talk has cost us, and I don't know how many more of her Majesty's regiments, to say nothing of ships of war, a journey to Ireland, and the loss of comfortable quarters. Not that I mind it personally, for as it happens I had rather be here than anywhere else. We shall have to stay in Ireland till the trials of the state prisoners are over, I expect, for fear of attempts at rescue; and some of the most conspicuous of the agitators are missing still. That fellow, O'Donnell—have you seen an account that has appeared lately in a government paper, of a speech he made on the occasion of the return of their precious delegates from Paris? There is rank treason enough in it to hang ten men."

"I ran my eye through it—it was arrant absurdity; but it was spoken under excitement by a lad of twenty-three, and a poet; that ought to be taken into consideration."

"I don't see why it should. There's no law that I know of to justify poets at any age in speaking treason against the Queen. Paltry considerations like that are just what I'm afraid of. If we had a good strong Tory Government now, we should be secure of the thing being rightly gone through with, and a lesson given that would keep the poetasters silent for a generation or two, but you shilly-shallying Whigs will be for half measures. For sending the traitors across the sea, whence they can send their poison back to disturb weak minds for another half century. Ugh! it's enough to make one sick!"

They were now walking down Castle Street, and John stopped before the monument let into the wall of Lynch Castle, to mark the spot where the stern father executed his rebellious son, with his own hands, in the face of an

execrating Celtic crowd, who could not appreciate the immolation of live family love to dead law.

"You rival old Lynch in public spirit," John said, looking up at the cross-bones. "You would not object to see your cousin Connor Daly hanged, I suppose, for the sake of justice?"

"Yes, but I should; he's not altogether an Irishman, but he has good English blood in his veins, and though I have always thought him the weakest fool I ever came across, I can make allowance for his having been misled. I was speaking of D'Arcy O'Donnell who has brought all this trouble into the family. I have no partiality for hanging, however—it would not be the remedy that I should prescribe. If things had gone to my mind, this insurrection with which we have been threatened so long, should have been allowed to make a respectable beginning, and the rebels should have mustered strong enough for something like a campaign, then they would have had a chance of getting a lesson that would have lasted them a while. We need not have waited for judge and juries to decide where the treason was deep-dyed enough for punishment. Bayonets would have made quicker work."

"Shall you complain of this disappointment to your cousin, Miss Daly?" asked John with a smile lurking in the corner of his mouth, as the thought rose that at all events this rival was not much to be dreaded.

"Why should I not? It is vexation at the misery this wretched business has brought on my aunt and Ellen that makes me so savage. I would have her eyes opened, poor dear girl, for it has been more than one could well bear to see her estranging herself from her best friends, for the sake of unpractical notions whose true bearing she does not in the least comprehend. It has not been her fault; the folly was put into her head by designing people for their own selfish purposes. Once she has come to her senses again she will be all right."

The patronising tone was too much for John, and determined him to end the conversation.

"Let us cross the road," he said; "I want to go into that little jeweller's shop to have my watch regulated; perhaps you would like to walk on—I may be detained there some time."

"Oh, no, I have nothing to do, I may as well turn in with you as not. There is always something absurd to be seen in the shops here. I daresay we shall find the jeweller selling drugs, or tea, or patent medicines, in turn with his clocks and watches. They are such a beggarly set, one finds something to laugh at wherever one goes here."

It was a low dark room, its projecting bay windows thickly hung with dusty second-hand watches and shabby jewellery, letting in little light from the narrow shady street.

A wizen-faced, spectacled old man, was seated behind the counter, peering into the works of a tarnished silver watch as big as a turnip, by the aid of a dim lamp. John gave his watch and chain into this man's hands with instructions to regulate the one and remedy a twisted link in the other, and then he went and stood at the far end of the shop, absently staring up at the pictured moon face of an eight-day clock, while his companion poked about among the jewel cases, and distracted the shopman's attention from his work by criticising and pricing his goods. A customer entered the shop while this was going on, and after hesitating a moment on seeing it occupied, went up to the owner and spoke a few words to him in a low voice. The old man's shrill answer reached John's ears, and interested him so much as to make him turn round to look at the new comer.

"I am very sorry, sir," the shopman was saying to a tall young man, who leaned so far over the counter that John could not see his face, "I am very sorry, but I could not, as things go, afford to give more than thirty shillings for this ring. The setting is very slight, and we have no sale whatever for such things now."

"I shall not part with it for less than the sum I named—give it back to me," the young man answered with a tone of alacrity in his voice, that sounded to John as if he felt the refusal a reprieve.

"I'm sorry, sir, but money is very scarce just now, and we are overdone with parties bringing trinkets for sale."

"Well, give it me back again."

The speaker rose to his full height, as taking the ring from the shopman's hands he slid it on the finger of his

left hand again, and turned to leave the place, almost knocking over Marmaduke Pelham, who during the whole transaction had stood close to the counter, with his eyes fixed intently on the ring the jeweller was examining. John started, for there was something in the stranger's unusual height and air that struck him as familiar, and he was coming forward to question the shopman when Captain Pelham rushed up to him, seized him by the arm and dragged him out of the shop, without giving him time to speak.

"Here," he said; "this way—I want to keep that man in sight; don't stop walking to answer me; but have you any idea who that is?"

"No; how should I?"

"Then I can tell you—it's D'Arcy O'Donnell; or if not O'Donnell himself, a confederate whom he has sent to raise money for his escape to America. That was *her* ring he was trying to sell. Yes, *hers*, Ellen Daly's; she must have given it to him, curse him; and he is trying to raise money for his escape on it, the beggar!"

"Be calm; don't excite yourself. You can't be sure of this," John answered, surprised at the excitement that made the young man's cheek turn white and his eyes flash.

"I *am* sure; I could swear to that ring among a thousand. I gave it to her myself. I spent the first ten-pound note I ever possessed in my life on it, and she has given it to him. Come on; I sha'n't be calm while there's a chance of that fellow's giving us the slip among these narrow streets. We must see him into a house, and then fetch a constable. There are too many ragamuffins here lounging about who would help him off in a scuffle to attempt his arrest in the street. Ah, he is striking across the square! Let us keep within an easy distance; he is conspicuous enough in open ground."

"What a likeness to your uncle, Mr. Daly!" exclaimed John; "I could fancy it was himself come to life again. You are right; that must be D'Arcy O'Donnell. Did the likeness strike you?"

"No; I saw nothing but the ring. I hardly looked at the scoundrel's face; I didn't want to see him."

By this time the object of their pursuit had crossed

Eyre Square, and after pausing for a moment at the entrance of a small eating-house at the corner of South Street, opened the half-door and entered. John and Marmaduke reached the shop a few moments after his disappearance, but on looking in saw no one but an old woman seated on a stool in the middle of the floor, beating up eggs vehemently in a basin. From her there was of course nothing to be gained, in answer to their questions, but a flood of Irish, and Captain Pelham, disconcerted and breathless, retreated into the street, drawing John after him.

"Well," he said, "I suppose there's nothing for it but to bring a party of constables to search the house as soon as possible. We saw him go in there with our own eyes, and we can't be humbugged out of that if the whole town takes to speaking nothing but Irish. You stay and watch that he does not leave the house by either the back or front door. See, it's a corner-house, with a second door into that little street. You can easily keep your eye on both till I come back. You may depend on me not to be long away."

John stood at the door of the little eating-house till Captain Pelham had again crossed the square and disappeared round its opposite corner; then he raised the latch of the half-door and entered the shop, and once more confronted the voluble Irish-speaking old woman. She would not even look at him this time, but went on vehemently beating her eggs, without taking the smallest notice of his approach. He touched her on the shoulder at last, and put down a sovereign on the counter near her.

"I believe that you understand English as well as I do," he said. "Now listen to me. I am a friend to the gentleman who is now in your room upstairs, and mean to help him to escape if possible; but there is not a moment to be lost. Take me to him at once if you value his safety."

She looked up at him keenly for a second or two without speaking.

"Will you swear to me, by the blessed Lord, who was betrayed Himself, that you are not schaming treachery?" she said at last.

"I will," John answered earnestly. "I swear that I

mean kindly to the person I am seeking ; and I take Him who was betrayed Himself to witness that I have no guile in my thoughts."

"Then you can't do more ; for who would punish treachery if not Him that died by it !" she said slowly. "Take back your gould, sir ; I don't want that. Would I be paid for saving my foster-son, do you think ? Come along this way and I'll let you see him."

She led the way up a dark staircase, and pushing open a door at its head, ushered him into a decent room furnished as a dining-room, with chairs round a table covered with lately-used plates and dishes, and a horse-hair sofa at the far end, on which lay the man Marmaduke and John had pursued, already in a deep sleep. John only had a glimpse round the room, but he could always afterwards recall its appearance exactly. The oddly-shaped corners, the look of untidy comfort, the gaudy strip of carpet in the window-recess, the full-length shiny oil-painting of Daniel O'Conner that hung above the fireplace. Still less did he ever forget the attitude and expression of the figure asleep on the sofa ; for at sight of that all the other surroundings passed out of his mind, and another long-past scene rose up before his eyes, in which he felt as if he were again acting a part. He saw in memory a figure stretched out on a bare earthen floor, and a face hardly paler than the one now before him, and bearing a wonderful resemblance to it, which turned dying eyes to his, and said, with wan smiling lips, "I am glad I came here to-night instead of you." If John had had a doubt about what he meant to do ; if chivalrous feeling towards Ellen Daly's chosen lover had not already decided him on taking a certain course—that recollection and resemblance would have been enough. He stepped quickly across the room, and laid his hand on D'Arcy O'Donnell's shoulder.

"Mr. O'Donnell," he said, "you are in danger here—wake up. You have been watched into this house by an enemy, and a constable will be here in five minutes to arrest you. You had better leave this at once, and go to some securer hiding-place."

The sleeper woke up at the first touch, and was on his feet before John had half finished speaking, but after the

first startled expression had passed, a change came over his face, and he sat down again.

"You say you are a friend, and you no doubt mean kindly, but I wish that you had let me have my sleep out," he remarked quietly; "five minutes more of such sleep as I was enjoying would have been worth a great deal more to me than five more days of being hunted about. The end must come sooner or later; I had made up my mind to that when I turned in here; so why not this minute?"

"Come away with me—you have no time to lose," said John, authoritatively; "we will talk when we are in the street."

"My boy—my boy—do as the gentleman bids ye," pleaded the old woman; "he has sworn to me that he means well by ye, and ye would not break me heart intirely by letting the constables take ye under the roof where ye was nursed a baby? Would I iver sleep aisy beneath it agin?"

"You are right, Biddy, I need not inflict that trouble on you in return for your goodness, to make your house a marked place. I will go then and get my last free night's sleep somewhere else if I can."

He kissed the old woman on the cheek as he passed her in the doorway, and in another minute he and John were outside, walking along the square, in the direction of West Bridge, side by side. John slipped his hand under his new acquaintance's arm.

"I want to have a word or two with you; and yet I would not intrude on your retreat. Is there any direction in which you can walk safely without showing me more than you wish?"

"I am going towards the Claddagh; and I have no objection at all to your knowing that I have been living in the cabin of one of the Claddagh fishers for the last ten days. They hold themselves tolerably free of the law, and seldom admit a constable into the domains of the Fish King, so that the harbouring of one offender, more or less, is hardly likely to be brought home to them. Have you ever walked through the district?"

"No, never. I have always been told it was hardly safe for a stranger to do so."

"Then come with me, it is worth your seeing; and as

you seem to have made me a generous present of a summer's evening in the open air, I may as well spend an hour of it in introducing you to the alien people who must have been brought through the sea by some Pied Piper centuries ago. The reigning monarch is a friend of mine—though he is not a friend to 'the cause.' He would be quite as unwilling to recognise King O'Brien as Queen Victoria, for a rival authority to his own."

They had crossed the bridge now, and leaving the better houses and more regular streets behind them, were approaching a mass of low-roofed mud cabins, that stretched in long straggling rows across the plain, composed of mud and sand, partially covered with coarse grass, that sloped down to the sea-shore. As they approached the huts, two or three sturdy young men, with dark faces and fierce black eyes, strolled out as if to meet and inspect them, before they were permitted to enter the district. D'Arcy made some sign to them, and they moved aside, with a nod of welcome, and permitted him and his companion to pass on. The appearance of a decently-dressed stranger in the sodden grass-grown space between the cabins, which troops of half-naked children shared with herds of pigs, and flocks of geese and poultry, was evidently an unusual event, and brought all the inhabitants of the place to stare from the open doors of the windowless cabins. Into their dark recesses, lighted only by the dull glow of peat cinders on the hearths, John had ample opportunity to stare in return, for his progress through the live impedimenta that surged round was necessarily very slow. Withered old hags, lean and haggard, crouched on the door-sills, and smoked short pipes up into his face. Stalwart dark-browed men leaned listlessly against the door-posts, and sent suspicious glances after him. Slim brown girls, with shapely bare feet, and faces of a strange foreign beauty, peeped at him from under their head-shawls, with large soft gazelle eyes, such as painters love to depict over an Arab woman's face veil, while they twirled spindles before him, and turned spinning wheels, of shapes that were in vogue centuries ago. By the time he had reached the end of the last row of cabins, he felt as if he had passed through some strange phantasmagoric vision, where every gradation of human shape, from hideous deformity to the beauty of dream-land, was

presented to him in a rapid succession that took away his breath. One of the ugliest of the old hags, a moving mass of rags, filth, and wrinkles, stood before him as they were leaving the most densely thronged lane of cabins, and holding out a skinny hand, whined for alms. John was drawing out his purse, when D'Arcy stopped him.

"No, don't do that; don't let them see money; you would hardly get out of the place alive. It's a terrible thing to say, but it is true, this year, when the herring fishery having failed them, they are feeling the famine with the rest. You might walk through this place at night, with a hundred pounds in your pockets, no one would think of robbery; but if they believed they could coax or frighten you into giving, you would have no chance of getting away till you had parted with your last farthing. They are beginning to look anxiously at you now—let us move on."

The cabins were less crowded together as they proceeded, and soon they reached a white open road, terminating in a sandy ridge; on climbing which they saw the waters of the bay at their feet, divided from them only by a yellow strip of sandy beach. The fresh sea breeze and the stillness of the afternoon in this quiet place were welcome, after the crowd and din they had left a very little way behind them, D'Arcy lifted his hat to let the wind freshen his face, and then turned to John, with a smile and a half bow.

"I have shown you the Claddagh, in return for the great kindness you conferred on me an hour ago; and now perhaps it is time to say good-bye, and rid you of my company. I perceive you know who I am, and though I have not the benefit of the same knowledge with respect to yourself, I see you are an Englishman, and hardly suppose you can be anxious to be seen with me under present circumstances. I shall not forget that you have given me a last look at the sea."

"But, excuse me, I have not yet said what I followed you to say. You must not think me impertinent, but I want you to tell me what you intend to do next."

"Go back to the Claddagh for to-night, and to-morrow morning walk into the town and give myself up to the authorities there, who are on the look-out for me. The boys who have sheltered me during the last week would

not touch blood-money, or I would make one of them give me up and earn the two hundred pounds, that would keep the whole clan in luxury till better times come."

"Why give yourself up? have you no better prospect than that?"

"This morning I had, and the disappointment has broken me down. Do you see that ship riding at anchor, just beyond the harbour bar? This morning I hoped to be on board her before night. The captain had agreed to receive me and a friend of mine on board, and would have asked no questions. I was waiting only for my passage-money, for which I had written to a friend, whom I had substantially helped more than once in happier days, and who would, I felt sure, have no difficulty in lending me the small sum I asked. I risked a walk into the town to-day to get this letter (postmen don't frequent the Claddagh), and I had directed my friend to send it to my foster-mother's house. I received a shabby excuse—no money—and the ship sails early to-morrow. In fulfilment of a promise I once gave, I made an attempt to raise the few pounds I wanted so much on the only thing left in my possession that was worth selling, but, to confess the truth, I was not very sorry to fail. I could not raise my passage-money to America on my solitary valuable; but I am not sure that it is not worth more to me, than say ten years more of life out there—as things are now—I don't covet them."

"But you ought; at your age, and with your powers, you ought to cling to life; it is a cowardly act to let it slip from you for want of resolution."

D'Arcy shrugged his shoulders, and looked back at the Claddagh.

"Would you have me pass the rest of my days indebted for shelter and my daily bread, to the poor fellows there,—or what? I don't believe I have a friend in Ireland besides the one whose letter of excuse I have in my pocket, who has the power to help me with money this year."

"Yes, there is one person to whom you were indirectly the means of bringing a considerable sum of money, and some repute that has been of service to him since, and who always felt in your debt on that account. I know him; let me be his banker, and hand you over a portion of the

sum he believes you helped him to earn. The Claddagh people have spared my purse, you see, and it is as well they did so, as there is a ten-pound note in it. Let it be a loan from my friend if you like it better."

D'Arcy's face flushed. "I don't understand in the least—this is some generous fiction."

"Do you remember an essay in one of the *Quarterlies*, on 'Recent Irish Poetry?' It was inspired by your verses, and it is the writer of that article who considers himself your debtor."

"John Thornley—and you then are John Thornley?"

"It won't make you less willing to agree to my proposition that your guess is right," said John, holding out his hand.

D'Arcy clasped it in both his. "It makes me cease to wonder at your generous kindness. I have heard of you from my cousins—but, indeed, I cannot——"

"Yes, yes, you can; as I said before, at your age, and with your powers, you have no right to throw away any chance of redeeming the past."

"Redeeming—you are an Englishman. You utterly disapprove of all I have done. How can you reconcile it to your principles to aid my escape?"

"I leave it to you to justify me in the long run; but we waste time and opportunity in talking. Let us walk down to the beach. Do not I see some of your Claddagh fishermen pushing a boat into the sea? Let us meet them—come."

John walked on at a quick pace across the sand towards the boat, and D'Arcy followed. The evening tide was flowing in calmly and slowly, the little waves broke in musical ripples close to their feet. When they were within a few paces of the boat, D'Arcy paused and looked all round him, like a man just waking out of a dream. He took off his hat again, and the sea wind blew in his face. It came to him like an invitation from the land of freedom, and he felt in a moment that the power to persist in rejecting John's offer and return to the prospect of imprisonment and death had gone from him. From the sunny sky and the wide blue sea life had held out her arms to him, and was sweet still. He ran after John, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I accept your offer," he said; "you have given me back my life. I will take it at your hands, and owe you a life's gratitude for your conduct to-day. These fishers down there with the boat are waiting for me. It was agreed this morning that they should meet me here, at the turn of the evening tide, and I have not had an opportunity of acquainting them with my change of purpose. They would have waited in vain till morning but for you; but I think you had better not let them see you, as they will perhaps mistrust a stranger and an Englishman, and suspect danger."

John gave the purse into O'Donnell's hands, as he again shook them warmly. "We part here then; but I think there is a great deal more to come—that we shall hear of each other in the future."

"I know there is," said D'Arcy; "and, anyhow, I am glad I have seen you. I'll never forget your face now." His eye rested on John for a moment, with a peculiar look, keen and full of pain, and yet satisfied. "He'll do, I think," he said to himself, in a low voice. "It is what I might have expected." Then with another warm clasp of the hand, he turned away and walked rapidly towards the boat, whose owners had now recognized him, and were making signs to him to hasten.

John made his way back to the top of the sand ridge, whence he saw the whole process of the launch of the little fishing boat on the crest of a wave, the rowers taking their seats; the hoisting of the tiny sail, and its progress for some distance towards an opposite point of the compass to that where the emigrant ship lay. He watched it in all its devious tacks, till it was a little dark speck on the blue water; and longer still, till under cover of the deepening twilight, it drew near its real destination. Then he got up and walked towards the lighted town. He thought a great deal of D'Arcy, and the probable after course of the life he had that day given back to its owner; a great deal, too, of Mr. Daly on his death night. But most of all of Ellen, on the evening when she had read his first essay on D'Arcy's poems, and looking up to him with flashing eyes, had said the words that rankled in his heart still: "I hate every word of it." Would she ever come to know what he had done to-day, or be able in the smallest degree to estimate what it had cost him?

CHAPTER XLL

'Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest,
Love is best!"

R. BROWNING.

THE strength of the storm is spent, the highest wave has struck the hill, and fallen back baffled with hoarse murmuring of sullen complaint, yet the spectators on the shore, and the sailors out at sea, do not feel as yet any change and are slow to believe in the sunshine and calm that is on the way to them. The winds moan and sigh in sharp short gusts that may be the beginning of a new storm, the waves climb and threaten the shore with angry white heads, only thrust a little less near each time of approach; it takes a long time to ascertain positively by observation that the tide has turned. So it usually is in seasons of great calamity, national or private, the worst is past long before the sufferers admit hope into their hearts, or are able to acknowledge to themselves that the severest stress of their pain is over. There are almost always recurrences of calamity, new threatenings, fears, great shakings of the worn out or wounded souls which keep the agitated sea of emotion heaving and quivering for a long time before it can rock itself to the old calm. Long years must often pass before we can look back on a season of affliction, and referring to an event or hour say, "Yes, that was the time when the waves went over our heads and the bitterness of death was tasted, but after that slowly and gradually we began to take heart again; there were fallings back, clouds returning after rain, but the heartening, the restoring season set in after that hour."

The autumn months that followed Connor's and D'Arcy's escape to America were for the Dalys and their friends, and for the majority of the inhabitants of Good People's Hollow and its neighbourhood, one of those seasons of slowly returning prosperity and content broken by recurring anxieties and cares. The first days of Mrs. Daly's return from Galway with Lesbia and Pelham were clouded

by anxiety about Ellen, whom they found at Good People's Hollow in a state of such extreme weakness and prostration as hardly to be able to give an intelligible account of her night excursion down the lake, or of Connor's escape to the emigrant ship. Anne O'Flaherty had died during the night of her absence, and the shock of returning to the empty house, and of finding for the first time in all her experience, no one there to whom she could unburden her heart of its anxiety and agitation had been more overwhelming than all her previous suffering, or rather it had been the last straw of the long-accumulating burden, under which her energies, now no longer tasked on anyone's behalf, finally succumbed. For days and days she lay on her bed a prey to the slow consuming fever that had carried off so many victims from Ireland during the last sad years, not suffering much, and pronounced by Dr. Lynch to be in no present danger, but hardly ever conscious of what was going on around her, seeming to lead a curious double existence, in which she alternately lived over again the hours of the night journey down the lake, or accompanied Anne O'Flaherty across the dark waters of an unknown river, from the opposite bank of which voices hailed her, inviting her to approach nearer.

There was one person of the party who could distinctly have told what was the worst part of the suffering he endured in that eventful year. It was John Thornley, and he would have assigned his bitterest pangs to certain days when he rode up to the door of Happy-go-lucky Lodge with an intolerable ache of anxiety in his heart, and from an open window wreathed with passion flowers caught tones of the voice he loved best in the world, uttering mournful incoherent words that were now reiterated farewells, and now phrases of glad greeting and recognition that struck colder than even the farewells on his ear.

Anne O'Flaherty's funeral took place while Ellen's fever was at its height, and a fortnight after a second grave was opened in the churchyard under the hill, from which Connor and D'Arcy had resuscitated the arms, where the body of Peter Lynch was laid close to that of his mistress. The arrangements for both these ceremonies were left to Pelham's care, for John seemed just then unable to attend to the most necessary business, and in after times Lesbia

was wont to boast of the tact and knowledge of the people which Pelham displayed on those occasions, satisfying even the most exacting, that the utmost point of old custom and traditional respect and observance was rendered to the memory of the two who had lately reigned supreme over the district.

"He pretends that I helped him," she would say in conclusion, "but I am sure I don't know how he can imagine such a thing, for all I ever did was to sit beside him while he considered exactly how poor Connor would have ordered all if he had been master here instead of us; and then he and I agreed together to carry out what we believed would have been Connor's wishes. Pelham does not object, as he once would have done, to the enthusiasm the people feel for him now, because they believe he suffered for the cause. Since he has been in prison with some of the boys and has got to know them thoroughly he can put up with their warm expressions of thanks and gratitude, and no longer thinks it humbug. He is even at the bottom of his heart very much obliged to them for having given him back their allegiance so readily, and being as glad as they all are, that he is coming back to Castle Daly to reign over them; as glad, it really seems, as they would have been if his father had come to life again, or the revolution had succeeded, and Connor had got the estate back for his own. John says that it is very illogical of them to go on talking about him as if he had both suffered for the cause, and given himself up, though innocent, to save his brother; because he could not have done the two things. The people about here, however, will always go on saying that he did both, and if they mean that double praise and gratitude are due to him, I think myself that somehow, in spite of John, their way of understanding his conduct must be the right one."

The satisfaction felt by the neighbourhood in the funeral observances with which Miss O'Flaherty and Peter Lynch were laid to their rest, though it did something to soothe the wild grief of the inhabitants of Good People's Hollow, did not by any means overshadow their anxiety for Ellen's recovery. This John Thornley had to acknowledge to himself when he went among the crowd assembled in and about the tent where Peter Lynch's wake feast was

held. He had come out in a mood of restless misery, seeking not so much for distraction as for that bitter tonic of self-pity which he fancied would be afforded by the sight of other people's forgetfulness contrasted with his own overwhelming anxiety, and he received a medicine different from that he had come to seek; the balm of a sympathy so pervading and true, that its subtle soothing could not but creep to the heart most resolved to hug its sorrow in solitude.

There was revelling here and there, and everywhere the eager delight at the sight of plenty which might be expected from those who had had want for their daily companion during three long years. But as John passed from group to group and listened to the words that fell from the lips of the feasters, he could not find any of the disgust or grudging in his mind that he had expected such a scene on the eve of a funeral, while the most popular person in the neighbourhood lay in peril of death, would have called up. He did not even wince when he heard Ellen's name passed about by people who had been drinking and shouting a few minutes before, or feel greatly scandalized when girls broke from a dance to throw themselves on their knees in the corner of the tent, and begin with streaming eyes to recite the prayers they had vowed to offer hour by hour for her recovery. It might be all very grotesque, very inconsistent, very reprehensible, when regarded from a distance, but at the time, objections and repugnances were fused in the white heat of a common emotion, which through all the uncouth and childish forms of its manifestation proved itself true and deep. John even found that his English reserve could bear, without much pain, the shock of perceiving that his own peculiar right of participation in the prevailing anxiety was recognised and silently honoured, known even to mean what it did mean. To his own surprise he found himself not outraged and pained, but touched almost to tears when a bare-footed girl who had lately, with much blushing, brought up a ragged shamefaced youth and presented him to Lesbia, turned towards him and raising soft blue eyes to his face, offered him a bunch of white roses, with the information that they were gathered from a tree that Miss Eileen herself had planted by their cabin door, and that

every future flower the tree might bear was vowed to the Blessed Virgin's altar for Miss Eileen's recovery.

"Shure," the girl added, with a shy glance at the boy still hovering near, "it's a tinder sympathy wid the true lovers our Blessed Lady has, for did not she hear me when I went to her for my own bachelor, that is my husband to-day, and put it into your honour's heart, the saints reward ye for that same, to get him back for me out of prison?"

Bride Thornley, for whose speedy return John had entreated, arrived at the Hollow the day after Peter Lynch's funeral, and a few hours after her entrance into the house was installed in full charge of the sick-room. Order, regularity and calm seemed to follow her steps, and from that day the invalid began to mend. Bride would not have permitted a wake to take place within a few yards of the room where her patient lay sick of nervous fever, and she could not conceal the contempt she felt for the excuses which John and Pelham urged in excuse of their compliance. After a trifling disagreement, however, on that score, everything went smoothly. Mrs. Daly, who was of too anxious a temperament to make a good sick nurse, was thankful to yield the chief management of the sick-room to Bride's skilful hands, and Ellen, who had never in her days of health sought Bride's company, turned to her in her suffering and weakness with an absolute clinging dependence that laid a strong hold on Bride's generous nature, and banished every shade of jealousy or grudging from her heart for ever. As day by day little tokens of amendment in the patient's state appeared, and were attributed by Dr. Lynch to Miss Thornley's careful nursing, fresh links were woven between these two, and when Bride dressed Ellen on the first day of her leaving her room she did not feel as if it were the old rival whom she had distrusted and been tempted to envy, whose golden hair she arranged with affectionate pride, but rather some altogether new creature whose charms and whose manifold sweetnesss were in some sort a possession of her own that could hardly be rightly appreciated by anyone but herself. It had not come into her previous experience to be brought into close intimacy with a person to whom expressions of affection, and tender flatteries, and eager acts of love came spontaneously

and followed feeling as necessarily as breathing does being; and after the first surprise she could not deny that this gracious warmth of nature was pleasant to her and would be missed as the unclouded sunshine of southern lands is missed by those who return to colder climates. She began to dread the thought of living out of sight of the one face that now always flushed with pleasure when she came near, out of reach of the hands ever ready to be stretched out towards her for welcome or caresses, out of hearing of the voice that in all the feebleness of sickness had been so profuse in thanks for every little service rendered. She did not know that she could face the blank such a loss would leave any better than John could really face the estrangement he was always anticipating as the end of their present engrossment in the Dalys' affairs.

When Ellen was well enough to be left for an hour or so of an evening, Bride and John used to pace up and down the short garden walk in front of the house while Pelham and Lesbia indulged in endless lovers' talk in the sheltered nook of the bridge head that had been the lovers' corner ever since the bridge was built. Then John always propounded the same plan for their joint future lives which Bride always listened to with the same consciousness that he was longing all the time for her to dispute its inevitableness, and the same wonder at herself for the pain it cost her not to be able to do so truthfully. They were to remain a few weeks longer in Ireland till Lesbia was married, and till such arrangements could be made as would enable Ellen Daly to manage the Good People's Hollow estate, left her by Anne, advantageously. Then they would take their departure together and spend a year or so in foreign travel, out of the way of being called upon to take part in events which the next year would certainly bring, viz., the departure of Ellen to join Connor and his friend in America, or, if such a course could be safely ventured, the return of D'Arcy O'Donnell to fetch his bride, now well enough endowed for such a marriage to be possible. How delightful the prospect of that foreign tour would have been to Bride once, and how she hated now to hear John hold forth upon it with that look of determined resignation on his face, with those long pauses between

his words, which were, she knew, employed in listening for the chance of a low voice calling them from the window, or in watching for the appearance of a thin white hand put forth to beckon them in. How jarring it was when instead the wind brought sounds from the bridge's head, sounds of soft mirth and infinite content—

“The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies.”

Well, life is long after all, and bitterest disappointments are lived over, wound up into the life-web by the Norn's skilful fingers, and hidden away by new threads, of silver perhaps, if not of gold. It was actually only four years since they first came to Ireland; they came two, and they would leave two; and the new foreign home they would make for themselves would no doubt be at first dreary, then tolerable, and then calmly pleasant enough.

As the autumn closed in, the evenings were differently spent. Dr. Lynch was so well satisfied of his patient's re-establishment as to leave Connemara for Dublin, to give evidence in favour of the prisoners in the State trials going on there through October. He had seen and heard enough, he said, at all events, to speak to the inaccuracy of the statement sworn to by some of the witnesses, that Mr. Smith O'Brien had pointed out the police to his followers, and ordered them to “slaughter the whole of them.” After his departure, the chief interest of the day was concentrated on the reading of his letters reporting the progress of the trials, which John fetched each morning from Ballyowen, and read aloud to Bride and Ellen at night.

Pelham's and Lesbia's wedding was fixed for a late day in October, and just a week before, the happy bustle of preparation was somewhat dulled by the gloom which spread over some members of the household, when the news of the sentence passed on the prisoners reached them. John read aloud to the family circle, from which Ellen would not be excluded, the Judge's summing-up, the verdict of the jury, and the awful sentence of the law :—

"That you, — and —, and — be taken hence to the place whence you came, and be thence drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, and that each of you be there hanged by the neck till you be dead ; and that afterwards the head of each of you shall be severed from the body, and the body of each be divided into four quarters, to be disposed of as her Majesty shall see fit : and may the Almighty God have mercy upon your souls."

There was a long silence after the words were read, and deep sobs from Mrs. Daly were heard through the room ; but Ellen lifted up the face she had hidden in her hands, dry-eyed, though pale as death.

"Is it very selfish," she asked, in a faint awed voice, "that I can feel nothing?—but, oh, such thankfulness for the omission of one name that might have been in that sorrowful list ! I shall be very sorry for those others soon ; but just this minute I can only be thankful." She held out her hand to John as she spoke, and he took it and kept the trembling fingers in his steady clasp, till Bride came forward, and carried off her convalescent to bed.

John was alone in Anne's turret room, when Bride came down-stairs again, spreading out his papers on the table, and preparing for a long evening's work.

"You heard her, John," she said, coming up to him eagerly. "You heard it plainly she said *one* name, and she could not have forgotten her brother ; it was Connor's name that rose up in her mind ; it was Connor who occupied her thoughts so exclusively, as to shut out everyone else. I am certain of that."

"Yes, so am I," said John, deliberately. "I have thought it over, and I am convinced she meant Connor ; but what of that ? It was one moment's strong feeling, the love of kindred that in such hearts as hers asserts its supremacy over everything else at times : we ought not to conclude anything from that."

"But, John, now we have begun to speak on the subject, I have something else to tell you. You really must let me speak."

"It cannot be anything of importance."

"But it is something of importance, and I may not be able to get it said if I don't speak now. Yesterday, in looking over a drawer full of old papers of Anne

O'Flaherty's, Ellen came upon a letter of mine, addressed to her more than a year ago—at the time when you paid that hasty visit to Ireland. You remember the occasion of it, John?"

"Well."

"She put my letter into her pocket without re-reading it; but when I came back into the room an hour after, I found her crying over it as if her heart would break."

"You had better not have told me this. It is hardly fair towards her, now that you and she are so much to each other, for you to watch her changes of mood and carry them to me; and it is doing me no kindness. To be disturbed by false hopes, when I am learning to think of her as pledged to another is more than I can bear. Don't try to do it, Bride. Never tell me anything about her again. Let it be a sealed subject between us as hitherto."

"No, no, no!—it shall not. I have been silent a long time, John; I have listened to all your doleful plans, and seen you struggling from day to day, to ossify yourself into a statue of despair, and I have not said a word for fear of hurting you; but now that my own common sense tells me you are making a mistake, I will not hold my tongue any longer. And, John, I never thought I should speak in this fashion to you; but it has come to this—it is for my own happiness I am plotting quite as much as for yours. I can't afford to let her go out of our lives much better than you can; and I tell you this frankly, that if you have not courage to win her and make your life complete, I shall not go away contentedly with the sullen spoilt half of you that will leave Good People's Hollow with me. She must be a witch, for she has got hold of me so completely that I cannot any longer be satisfied with you alone. I shall always feel that something is wanting, and that you will never be worth all you might be even to me, if you don't get her."

"You don't suppose that I want your testimony to that, do you? You don't suppose that I can't feel that better than you?"

"I want to be sure that you feel it enough not to let pride or any other folly lose you a chance of happiness."

"You may be sure that pride shall not. I should have

asked her again twenty times over if nothing but pride stood in the way."

"Then let me tell you all I have discovered."

"No, no; she would not like it, and I don't believe you can have discovered anything about her that I don't know by intuition already; but I am all the same obliged to you, Bride, for your zeal, and it will be a link between us whatever falls out, and a spur to urge me to bring a little more than that disagreeable maimed half-self you describe to our common home if we do go away together. Now leave me to write my leading article in favour of a reprieve being granted to the rebels; it must be sent off by the early post to-morrow."

Bride retired to her room, but she observed that John did not immediately turn to his work. She heard him open the front door, and saw him set out in the cold October moonlight for a walk up the valley. On coming down stairs in the early morning next day she found the newspaper article written and folded to go by the post. The state of the candles burned down to the sockets showed that the work had not been completed till very far into the night; yet John did not seem at all fatigued by the loss of rest; there was more vigour and brightness in his face when he appeared at breakfast than she had seen there for many a day.

The short busy days that were carrying Lesbia on to her crowning day passed in a whirl of occupation with most of the household. Mrs. Daly was a little scandalized that John could seldom be found to give an opinion on any of the arrangements for his sister's wedding. During that last week he was generally either shut up in his study writing newspaper articles or reading MS. to Ellen, and asking her advice how to make a sentence more telling, or an argument in favour of leniency towards the State prisoners more convincing. She thought it a little strange and unsympathetic of those two to be more occupied with questions of politics than with the approaching event in their own families, but Bride's diligence was sufficient for the despatch of all necessary business, and the sight of Pelham's triumphant happiness, and Lesbia's attention to herself, so entirely satisfied her as to leave no room for plaintiveness. The wedding was to be celebrated at Castle

Daly. Bride, who had lately been making constant excursions there, left the Hollow finally with John and Lesbia a few days before the day fixed for the ceremony, and Mrs. Daly followed her so as to arrive on the previous afternoon. Pelham gave his last evening to Ellen, who was not yet strong enough to bear the drive to Castle Daly, and was to be left at the Hollow one solitary day. He was very kind and tender to her during the hours they were alone together, while Ellen reclined on Anne's sofa, wheeled in front of the turf-fire, and Pelham sat on the low stool in the nook by the hearth that used always to be Connor's corner on winter evenings in the old times. They avoided all allusion to the past, and talked cheerfully of the bright future that was opening out for one of the two; and Pelham consulted Ellen about his plans, asking her advice as to his future conduct towards his tenants and dependants with a deference to her superior knowledge of the people which, while it gratified her, gave her a strange sensation of having died to her girlish self, and wakened up in the middle of Anne O'Flaherty's life, with all her former cares resting on her shoulders, and the task given to her of advising the owner of Castle Daly, which Anne had exercised for so many years.

Ellen rose early the next day and saw Pelham ride off in the dewy October morning to his wedding. She fastened the last of the passion-flowers from Anne's favourite creeper into the button-hole of his coat with a keen recollection of how she had intended to bestow some of its earlier blossoms, and then stood in the open doorway and watched his figure lessening along the winding road till it was lost among the low bushes on the hill-side. The valley had never looked fairer, or showed more like an enchanted region, jewel-paved with emerald and diamond and azure, than it appeared when Ellen found herself left alone to gaze on the misty outline of its protecting hills, the blue thread of its winding river, its opal-coloured lake, and its green slopes all growing momentarily more distinct in the brightening sunshine. There was the old glamour of beauty, but there was something wanting; the old sights were there, but not the old sounds. A strange silence reigned all about the place that fell like an ache on Ellen's heart, and ere long sent her back with fast-filling

eyes to shut herself into the empty house. In vain she told herself that as far as the house was concerned it was only the solitude of one day. Her mother would return happier than she had ever been before, and there would soon be visits from bride and bridegroom, and new interests and pleasures and occupations would spring up, making Happy-go-lucky Lodge a centre of happy life again. As she was quite alone Ellen thought she might spare at least half her thoughts from the joyous event of the day that occupied everybody else entirely, and give herself up for a little space of time to communing with the past, to wandering about the turret-rooms, and in and out of Anne's haunts, and in imagination peopling them with the figures and faces so familiar to them once, but which they would now know no more. This at least was her uppermost train of thought as she crept languidly up and down stairs, and stood for half-an-hour together looking vacantly round the sitting-rooms. Visions of Anne, and Peter Lynch and Connor, and Murdock Malachy seemed to fill her mind to the exclusion of everything else; and yet if she had spoken out aloud the thought that weighed heaviest on her heart, and seemed to underlie and form a dark background to all her sad recollections, she would have repeated a sentence that had fallen from Pelham's lips on the previous evening, when he had asked her advice on the plea that his old adviser, John Thornley, would soon be altogether out of reach, since he and Bride had decided on starting on their foreign tour immediately after the wedding. The house would not miss them; *they* could not be reckoned among its old frequenters; their faces and figures had no right to come among the throng which Ellen's fancy called up, and whose absence she mourned over; and yet she could not deny to herself that it was the thought of their desertion that made the future she pictured herself as leading in these rooms, so empty of interest, so full of cares too heavy for her to bear alone. Towards afternoon she lay down on a sofa by the turret window and, quite worn out with the agitation of the morning, fell asleep, and slept for some time, till about an hour before sunset she was awakened by the sound of horse's hoofs on the bridge. She had told herself a great many times during the day that she must not hope for

news from Castle Daly till the next morning. No one could be expected to come out to the Hollow on such a busy day merely for the sake of saving her a few hours' solitude and to give her the morning's news a little earlier than her mother could bring it. She had told herself this many times, yet when the turret-room door opened, and John Thornley entered with a bridal-bouquet in his hand, and good news written on his face, she did not feel exactly surprised; she all at once understood that she would have been bitterly disappointed and very unhappy indeed if he had failed to come. Lesbia had sent Ellen her bride's bouquet, John explained, and Ellen, taking it from his hand, buried her face among the orange blossom and white roses, while he took a seat by her sofa, and proceeded to satisfy her curiosity about the morning's ceremony. If he had come solely as news-bearer he did not perform his errand very satisfactorily. His voluntary remarks soon came to an end, and Ellen found it difficult to drag out any but the shortest and least intelligent answers to her questions.

"Why, you might almost as well have been here with me all the morning for any interesting information you can give me," she said at last. "You don't seem to have seen anything that happened; you must have been dreaming the whole time. I don't suppose there is a child above three years old in all Daly's Corner who could not tell me more about how the bridegroom looked, and how the bride behaved, and what everybody said and did and ate and wore, than you seem able to do."

"Perhaps I was dreaming; it was very much out of place; for by rights on such occasions the bystanders are wide awake and critical, and the principals have the privilege of not knowing what they are doing. However, don't suppose that I am guilty of the presumption of coming to the Hollow to describe what I have not been observing. It was to give you some other news that I rode out here to-night.

"It is not bad news, I can tell by your face. The State prisoners are reprieved."

"I told you that was certain from the first; and if you had looked into the newspaper I sent you this morning, you would have seen the official announcement of the change of their sentence to transportation for life."

"Then you have something else to tell me?"

"Letters from America have arrived at last."

"You have brought me one from Connor?"

"Connor's letters are to your mother and Pelham, and Mrs. Daly was not able to spare hers for you when I started. She had not read it often enough. She will bring it herself early to-morrow. The best I could do for you was to bring you a short note that fell to my share."

"From Connor?"

"No. Would it be too great a favour to ask you to go out with me to the bridge-head? I could talk better there; and I want you to read my American letter, and explain a sentence in it I cannot understand. The air is warm still, and I think you walked as far as the bridge with Pelham yesterday."

"Oh, yes; the walk will do me good."

But though Ellen set forth bravely, her limbs trembled under her before the little space was crossed; and she was glad to find a seat on a moss-grown coping-stone that had long ago fallen from the parapet on the further end of the bridge, and to lean her head back against the wall. It was not fatigue, for she had walked much farther yesterday without being tired; it was something in John's face that agitated her, making her feel that she had once more come to a turning-point in her life when, perhaps—perhaps—all that she had once thrown away might again be placed in her hands to take and keep. John waited silently a few minutes, till she had so far recovered her strength and breath as to volunteer a faint remark on the beauty of the evening, before he took a letter from his pocket, and, unfolding it, placed it in her hands.

"Read," he said; "it is only half a page; read, and I will come back to you."

He walked away towards the house so as to avoid watching her as she read, and Ellen, in some bewilderment, turned her eyes on a sheet of foreign letter-paper, about half filled with D'Arcy O'Donnell's writing. What could he have to say to John Thornley, whom (as far as Ellen knew) he had never seen? The letter began—

"DEAR FRIEND,—In these modern days, heart's blood and tears are, luckily for us poor poets, sometimes con-

vertible into gold. I have coined some of mine, viz., 'A Call to the Kelts,' and a 'Farewell to Ireland,' printed in *Harper's Magazine*, and herewith despatched to you, with the payment I received for them, being the exact amount of my debt to you. Don't suppose I dream of wiping out in such fashion the obligation incurred by me to you on my last evening in 'ould Ireland.' My gratitude for that is a part of my life, and will only cease with it; but I want to show you that I have lost no time in following your advice in my own fashion. If you will do me one more favour, read my verses to my cousin Ellen Daly, and tell her that, rebel as I am, and shall always remain, against English supremacy, there is one union between Kelt and Saxon that will have my blessing upon it whenever it takes place. Connor has enlightened me—but I knew it before—and tender you my good wishes most heartily. Of course, you have told her long ere this what you did for me, and it will have pleased her.

"Yours faithfully,

"D'ARCY O'DONNELL."

Ellen had risen from her low seat, and was standing in the middle of the bridge, looking down over the parapet into the river, with the folded letter clasped between her hands, when John returned to her. She did not move or alter her position at the sound of his step, nor even when he came close and stood at her side, till, unable to bear the suspense any longer, he gently touched her shoulder, and said—"Well, have you read?"

Then she turned a face to him into which all the colour and life of old times seemed to have rushed back suddenly, restoring her from the sick, drooping girl of the last few months, to the brilliant Ellen Daly he had first known and loved. The once pale cheeks were full of colour—the eyes of tender, dewy light as closely allied to smiles as to tears.

"I want first to know what you did for him," she said, hurriedly, but timidly, holding out the letter to John. "Yes, tell me at once; it is a part of the history of that dreadful week before I was taken ill, of which I know nothing, and yet" (dropping her voice very low) "it would

have done me good—it would have comforted me beyond anything.”

Then John crossed his arms over the parapet, and, leaning so as to look full in her face, gave her, in a voice that he found it hard to keep steady throughout, a detailed account of the events of the afternoon when he had seen D’Arcy O’Donnell for the first and last time; the attempted sale of the emerald ring; his arousing D’Arcy from sleep in the little parlour over the baker’s shop; their walk through the Claddagh; their last words on the shore; his own reflections as he sat on the sand-bank and watched the little boat that was bearing O’Donnell away drop down westward.

“It was of you I thought,” he said, in conclusion. “It was the lucky man you loved, I believed I was sending away from death or imprisonment. If I could secure your happiness even so, I believed at the moment that I should be content. During these last months there have been times when I have found it very hard to bring that persuasion into your presence. I had come to the conclusion that I could not bear the struggle any longer; that I must leave you for ever. Since reading that letter this morning, the possibility of my being mistaken as to your feelings for your cousin, and of there being still a hope, however distant, for me, has entered my mind. If there is absolutely no hope, tell me at once, and let me go; for less than ever shall I be able to bear the blank of despair, if this gleam goes out in darkness; but if there is a hope—I don’t say that you love me already—but that you might possibly come in time to love me, then keep me near you to work for you; at least, till you are stronger, and can do without me. Hold out your hand to me, and I am your servant for as long as you like.”

“Nay,” said Ellen, holding out her hand, “there would be no use in your staying for that. I have plenty of servants, and the trouble is that I don’t know what to do with them.”

He took the other hand and drew her towards him.

“But I may stay? and you will try to learn to love me a little?”

"I never believed much in trying; it would not come to me that way," said Ellen, yielding both hands, and allowing herself to be drawn into his arms; "but——"

"My darling, I do believe you mean to say that you love me already."

There was no denial, and little more was said till, when they were sauntering back to the house together, John stood still abruptly by the door-step, and exclaimed—

"It is so wonderful, so bewildering to me, I cannot enter into the joy of it as I ought. You must tell me a little more of the when and the how, to give me certainty."

"Perhaps," Ellen answered, with a trembling smile, and a very dewy light in the eyes she raised to his face, "perhaps it began with the shame I felt for having behaved so badly to you just here, when we stood and said good-bye a year ago, and you went into the turret-room and complained of me to cousin Anne; or perhaps it began long, long before, when we knelt in Dennis Malachy's ruined cabin together that night, and I felt, without understanding it, that my father's love and indulgence for me had passed on to you. I believe it *was* then; though I only knew what had happened to me by the pain that came when I thought I had driven you away from me for ever."

Then, when he would have embraced her again, she ran from him up the steps, and, turning round, placed her hands lightly on his shoulder.

"No, you must not follow me; you must not come in. It seems very inhospitable, but I don't want you to come into Happy-go-lucky Lodge to-night. You must ride home now, and tell mamma and Bride. I want to give this one more evening to thinking of Anne, and living over again in my memory all the dear little odd old ways of the place. You may say what you like" (for he was beginning eagerly to interrupt her) "about wishing to keep up all the old ways, and bringing no change. I know all you will say; but it's no use. You are not Peter Lynch, and could not and should not make yourself into him, if you tried ever so; and it

will be a new life that will have to begin here by and by. I must spend the last hours of Pelham's wedding-day in giving the old Happy-go-lucky ways a decent 'waking' all by myself."

Some summers ago a traveller in the west of Ireland, while traversing a cross-road among the Joyce Hills, not mentioned in any of the guide-books, was brought to a sudden halt by the disappearance of the horse between the shafts of the outside car on which he was riding, and his own descent upon a ridge of turf that lined the road. No one was hurt, but a wheel was off the car, and one of the shafts injured; and the driver, after spending a quarter of an hour in very vague attempts to repair the damage with a few yards of thin string that he produced from his pocket, subsided finally into scratching his head, and abusing the road that had caused the misfortune, and himself for his presumption in venturing upon it.

"Shure," he said, "it's one of the roads that was devised and made in the famine year, and few people take the trouble to drive along it or notice it at all. Why would they? seeing it's not the way to anywhere, and there ain't many cars and horses that would have the constitution to get to the end of it, if it tuck them to the gate of heaven itself, barring the three-wheeled car that Miss O'Flaherty built, and the sacret of that died out wid other things in the times of the black troubles ye'll have heard of."

"But," remonstrated the traveller, "you assured me when I hired the car that you were perfectly well-acquainted with the road, and it was the most direct way to a gentleman's seat situated on an island in a little lake among the Joyce Hills, which would well repay the trouble of a visit."

"And why would it not repay your honour's trouble? Shure it's there before yer eyes to look at, a step or two beyant; the road's as straight as an arrow, bad luck to it, for that's the way they made all the roads in the famine time. If ye follow it on and on, ye can't fail

to come in time to an opening between the hills, and ye'll see a fine gravelled path wid an iron gate at the head of it, and trees planted all up the hill-sides. If ye turn into the path it'll take ye straight to a beautiful summer-house, a fine place wid pillars, and cushioned seats to rest in, that the gentleman that owns the Hollow now has had built in the very spot where the valley and the lake can be seen to the best advantage. Nothing could be more convanient for your honour than that the horse, poor baste, should have come down wid ye just here, for he's given ye a fine excuse and a rason for staying in the summer-house, which isn't a mile from the Lodge itself, as long as iver you plase, till I come back wid a fresh car and fetch ye away."

"You are sure that I shall need an excuse and a rason?" asked the traveller, with a curious twinkle in his eyes. "The place is not a show place, I think you said, and a stranger who presented himself without an introduction would stand a chance of being turned away from the inhospitable door. Things were different I suppose in the time of that Miss O'Flaherty you alluded to just now?"

"Yer honour'll have heard of her in foreign parts; but that's quare," glancing curiously up into the stranger's face. "She's a dale thought of in the country still; but I can't say that I remimber myself the good times before the throubles whin she reigned in the land, not being to the fore in those days. Thim that has the knowledge do say the doings then was quite beyant anything that can be shown now—not that we've much to complain of in the jintleman that owns the Hollow, barring that he's an Englishman, and has by times notions of his own, and the lady comes of the ould stock of Dalys and O'Flahertys, and is loved and honoured far and near. If ye'd had the luck to meet her (ye'd have known her by the golden hair on her head), ye'd only have had to say that ye'd come by an accident on the bad road, and that Pater Malachy was the boy that was driving ye, and she'd have taken ye into the lodge and given ye the best intertainment, as indeed happened to a lady I was driving just to this very spot ten years ago. 'Twas on St. Peter's day by the same

toke that the young lady, Miss Eileen herself, was passing in the car wid her governess on the way to church, and they stopped to see if anyone was hurt, and took the strange lady back wid them to the Hollow, and she turned out to be some sort of an English relation of the master's and of his sister up at Castle Daly, and they kept her among them a month and more. Ye might have had the same luck yerself if ye'd come by this little overthrow a week ago; but now the lady's away in London, and there's nobody at the lodge to recave ye."

"You are sure of that," exclaimed the traveller, with a perceptible start and change of countenance. "You have it on good authority that the lady is from home just now?"

"And indeed on the best, for 'twas the young lady herself tould it to me own grandmother the last time she rode up to our cabin on her pony wid a compliment of tay and shugur for the poor old cratur that has been bed-ridden these three years. 'Mrs. Malachy,' says she, 'it's a double quantity I've brought ye to day, because it'll be a long time before I'll see ye again; we're going the whole of us to London,' or maybe it was Liverpool she said, 'to meet our uncle that's coming all the way from Ameriky to see us;' and they do say" (lowering his voice) "that the jintleman expected is one of thim that had to fly the counthry after the '48. God send him a safe voyage and a hearty welcome home, and the same to as many more of the loike of him as can come!"

"Your name is Malachy, I think you said," remarked the gentleman, putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket; "have you been settled in this part of the country long?"

"Since before I was born, yer honour. We came from Westport way, being starved out of our houlding in the famine; and the jintleman at the Castle put my father into a bit of a place a mile or two from here that had belonged once to a far-off cousin of our own on account of the kindness that he has to the name of Malachy. It's a lucky name to own in these parts, I can acquaint yer honour, for the quality at the Castle and at the Hollow don't seem to know how to make enough of the

five of us left to claim it. Just say up at the Lodge whin ye git there that it was young Pater Malachy, the boy wid the red hair, that druv ye and overturned ye, and there'll not be a nook or corner of the house that won't be open to yer honour to look at."

The stranger smiled, and brought a still broader smile into the face of his companion the next minute by slipping a piece of gold into his hand.

"I will walk up to the house, I think," he said, "and try the effect of your spell. You had better go back to the next cabin and get help with the car and horse, and you can bring the portmanteau up to the big house later, and I will give you directions then where to take it."

The vague phrase in the traveller's orders was interpreted liberally, and the day was a good many hours older when Peter Malachy, who had meanwhile spread abroad this new proof of the luck attending his name, appeared before the iron gate with the traveller's portmanteau and hat-box on a wheelbarrow, which he proceeded to wheel leisurely along the gravelled path to the summer-house he had so minutely described. The sound of voices in conversation greeted his ear on his approach, and purely for the sake of gaining information as to the whereabouts of the quality at the Hollow for the edification of his generous patron, Peter shoved his wheelbarrow aside among the shrubs, and creeping cautiously behind the house, put his eye to a crevice in the woodwork, and peeped in. To his surprise he discerned his late passenger engaged in eager conversation with the lady and gentleman of the house. They had their backs turned to him, and their faces to the view, but Peter had no doubt of their identity. The golden braids wound round the lady's head which her garden hat only half concealed, were enough to satisfy his mind, in spite of his late certainty of her absence in England, that the mistress of Good People's Hollow was before him. She was leaning on the arm of the strange gentleman, and Peter, crouching down and looking upwards, could see enough of his side face for a sudden flash of happy conjecture to enlighten his mind. The silky yellow beard, the merry blue eye, the broad brow, the laughing lips—how could he have sat beside them half-an-hour without arriving at the

certainty that it was the mistress's brother himself he was driving to the Hollow? They were speaking loud enough for him to hear every word. He no longer had the excuse he had given himself a minute or two ago for indulging his curiosity, but it would not be mannerly to interrupt the quality in the middle of a conversation evidently so interesting—and why not, when one has the chance, improve one's mind by hearing what they had got to say to each other?

"I am sorry you think the place so changed, Connor," the lady was saying, when Peter put his ear to the wall. "John and I flatter ourselves, that allowing for the alterations which changed circumstances and lapse of time must bring, we have been true to the spirit of the old traditions. We hope, at all events, that it is *Good People's Hollow* still."

"Yes, yes; but where *are* the people? that is what I cannot make out—to be sure I have only had a morning's experience—but though I see signs of prosperity about the place itself, and in the one or two cabins I have been in, I say again where *are* the people?"

"Ah, you may well ask that, we can't keep them from going; and now that you are here to agree with me, I will say out to John's face that it is just the one grief I have in my life. My only grief, you understand, Connor avourneen, now that I have seen you again. I get no sympathy from John. He is so convinced that the character of this part of the country needs must be changed, and that to discourage the emigration, and induce people to settle here in their former numbers, would only lead to another famine, that he cannot mourn as I do over the deserted villages and the silent hill-sides. Those who do stay are better off than their predecessors. Peter Lynch would stare if he could look into the cabins, and about the farmsteads on the estate now—yet they go—the least sign from over the sea, a breath of invitation from the relatives, who went in the bad times, tempts them away. It is the same thing round Castle Daly, though Pelham has become a proverb for an indulgent popular landlord, and has even gone in for Home Rule, much to poor old Uncle Charles's disgust; and to John's secret vexation, I fancy, between ourselves."

"Not at all," put in another voice; "it is precisely the course I foresaw Pelham would take, if Lesbia succeeded in forcing him into Parliament."

"Of course, I am not at all surprised to hear this," remarked the gentleman first addressed; "it is precisely what poor D'Arcy always prophesied. He said we should melt away like a rope of sand, if we failed to assert our nationality, at the crises of our misfortunes, when though in the extreme of suffering, the fatal remedy of disintegration was not yet established. He lived to see all his forebodings carrying themselves out, and died, poor fellow, a martyr to the foresight that would not let him encourage new ill-timed attempts."

"Of course you think as he did, I know he was your guiding star to the last; and, Connor avourneen, it was a ton load of apprehension taken from my heart, when I heard he had pronounced against Fenianism. I did not know that his honesty was to cost him his life. But though he despaired, and though I know no good can come of desperate remedies, I can't help having my own hopes and dreams of seeing old Ireland triumphant even yet. Why should there not come a time of true prosperity and happiness for her at last? Why should not the thousands who go away poor and ignorant, come back, not for war, but for peace, with riches, and wisdom, and good habits gained in the land of freedom and progress? Why should they not buy back their old lands, and settle themselves again where their fathers lived, and people the Green Isle with faithful loving sons and daughters, who have her name and honour at heart, and hold them dearer than their lives? Why should not this be again sometime?"

"Sometime! Ah, but when? Shall I tell you?"

"When backward the river Shannon flows,
When on the salt seas blooms the rose,
When fruit on the barren rock we find,
Or when our rulers are just and kind."

"And that won't be in the days of Home Rule, give me leave to tell you," dryly observed the gentleman

who had hitherto taken the least part in the conversation.

"Well," interrupted the lady quickly, "we won't drift into an argument this first morning; and, after all, Connor dear, it's not yourself that ought to have a word to say against the emigration; for what are you doing but giving up the old home for the new one you have made for yourself out in the far West, and for the clever little American wife that is in it? I want to hear more about her. Do you really mean to tell us that she is as pretty as Lesbia, besides being so wonderfully clever? Let us move on. Our mother and Bride are waiting at the bottom of the hill with the children, whom you scarcely saw this morning; and I want you to satisfy my mind at once, as to whether your Dermot or mine has most of the true Daly about him."

X

THE END.

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